

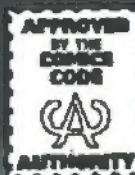
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SONIC SUPER SPECIAL™

GIANT 48 PAGES



SPAZ
PENDERS



"PRINCESS SALLY: ASCENSION"

*Illustrations by Jim Valentino
with lettering by Vickie Williams*

"HERSHEY: SOLO"

Illustrations and lettering by Ken Penders

"LUPE: FAMILY"

*Illustrations by Colleen Doran
with lettering by Vickie Williams*

"BUNNIE RABBOT: UPGRADE"

*Illustrations by FRY
with lettering by Jeff Powell*

"JULIE-SU: SHADOWS"

*Illustrations by Patrick 'SPAZ' Spaziente
with lettering by Jeff Powell*

*All stories written and inked by Ken Penders
with colors and separations by Josh and Aimee Ray*

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**G
R
I
V
R
E
L
S
!**

PRINCESS

in ASCENSION



ALL MY LIFE
I *NEVER*
HAD A CHOICE.

I WAS BORN *HEIR*
TO THE *THRONE*
OF ACORN AND
TAUGHT TO BE A
QUEEN
FROM DAY ONE.

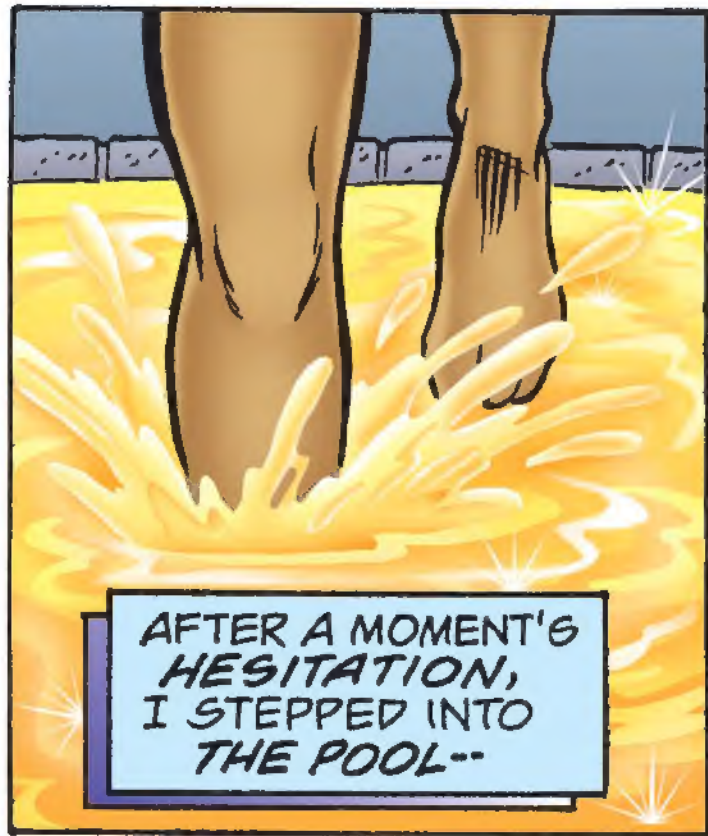
HAVING RECENTLY DISCOVERED
I HAVE A *BROTHER*, I FOUND
I WAS NO LONGER CHARGED
WITH CONTINUING THE *LINE*
OF *SUCCESSION*.

HOWEVER, *ELIAS* FELT OTHERWISE,
AND OFFERED UP THAT WHICH BY ALL
RIGHTS WAS HIS.

HAVING BEEN GIVEN A
CHOICE FOR THE *FIRST*
TIME IN MY LIFE, I KNEW
I HAD TO DECIDE--

NOTE: THIS STORY TAKES
PLACE BEFORE THE EVENTS
OF SONIC ARCHIVES VOL. 19
-- EDITOR

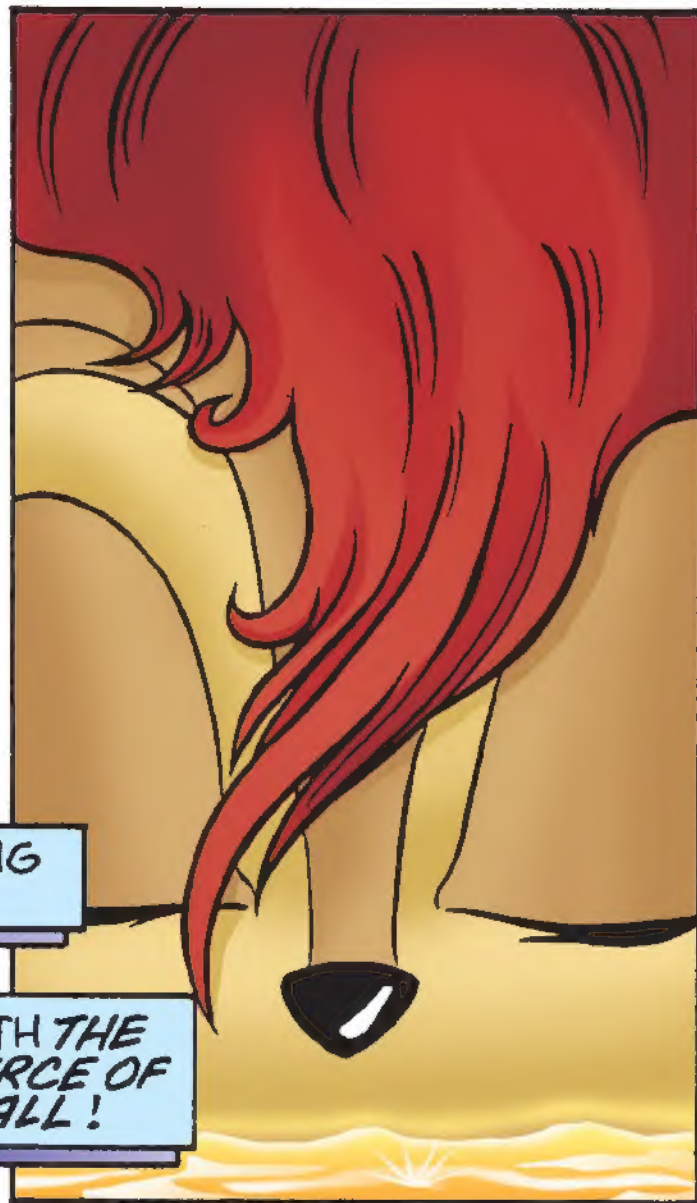
-- WHAT REALLY
MATTERED TO
ME.



AFTER A MOMENT'S
HESITATION,
I STEPPED INTO
THE POOL--

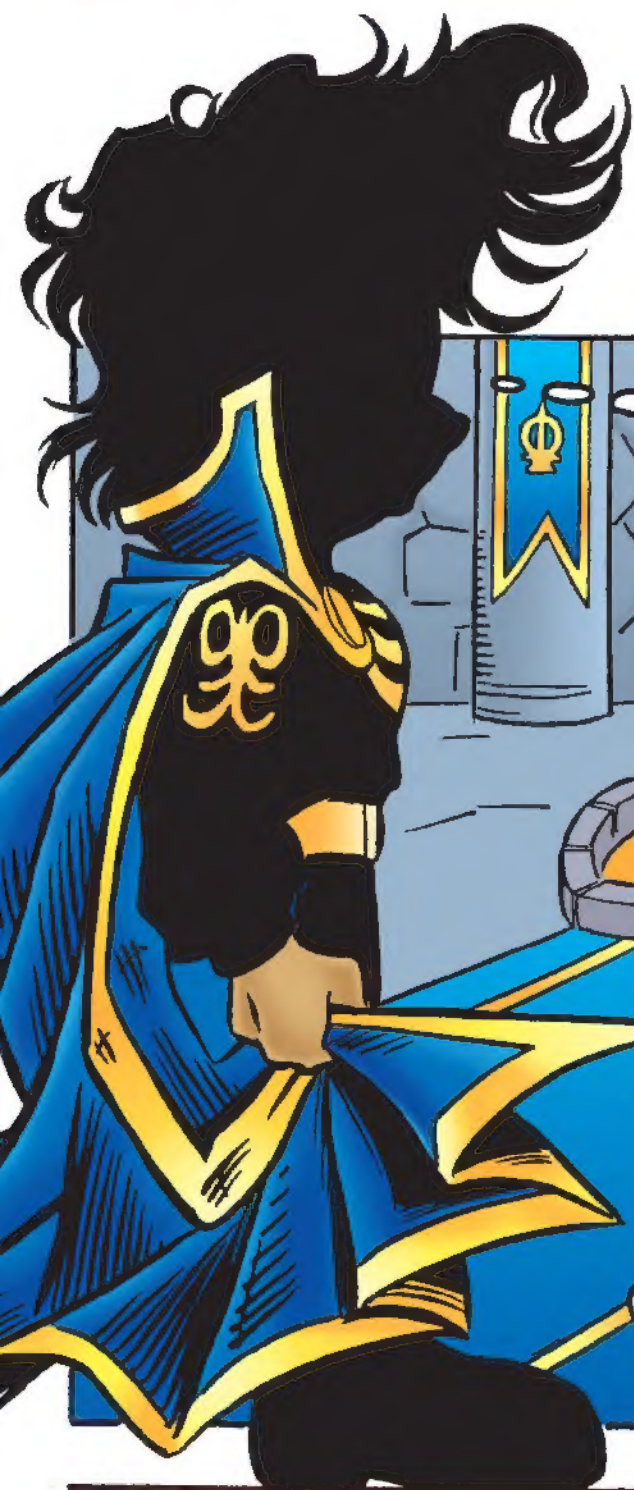


--DESCENDING
DEEPER--



--BECOMING
ONE--

--WITH THE
SOURCE OF
ALL!



IF THIS IS WHAT
YOU *TRULY* WISH
FOR, SALLY--

--THEN
YOU HAVE MY
UNCONDITIONAL
SUPPORT--



--NO MATTER WHAT
FATHER MAY SAY!



IT WAS MORE
BEAUTIFUL THAN
I COULD EVER
HAVE IMAGINED!

I COULD FEEL
MYSELF DRAWN
TO THE
LIGHT--

--TO MY-- MOTHER?!

MY DARLING DAUGHTER--

--I PRAY YOU GROW UP IN A WORLD THAT **NEVER** KNOWS ANOTHER WAR!

OH, MOTHER, HOW I WISH THAT WERE TRUE!

I GUESS I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO DIDN'T REALIZE THEIR DREAMS!

BUT NOW THE IMAGES FADE INTO ANOTHER!

ANOTHER **MEMORY** BECOMES **REALITY** BEFORE ME--

--AS I WALK THROUGH MY FAVORITE GARDEN ALONGSIDE MY **TEACHER**!

DO YOU EVER THINK THE WAR WILL END, JULAYLA?

THAT ALL DEPENDS ON WHETHER THE KING CAN **REASON** WITH THE **OVERLANDERS**!

BUT **WHY** WOULD ANY LIVING CREATURE WISH TO **HARM** ANOTHER?



YOU WISH TO KNOW WHY, CHILD?

LOOK UP IN THAT TREE! SEE THE *BUSH FEMUR*?

YES! IT SEEMS TO BE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING!



IT'S STUDYING THAT *GOLDEN WINGSPANNER* EATING THE *WORM* YOU SEE BEFORE YOU!

HOW COME?

JUST WATCH!



GROSS!!!! IT ATE THE WINGSPANNER!

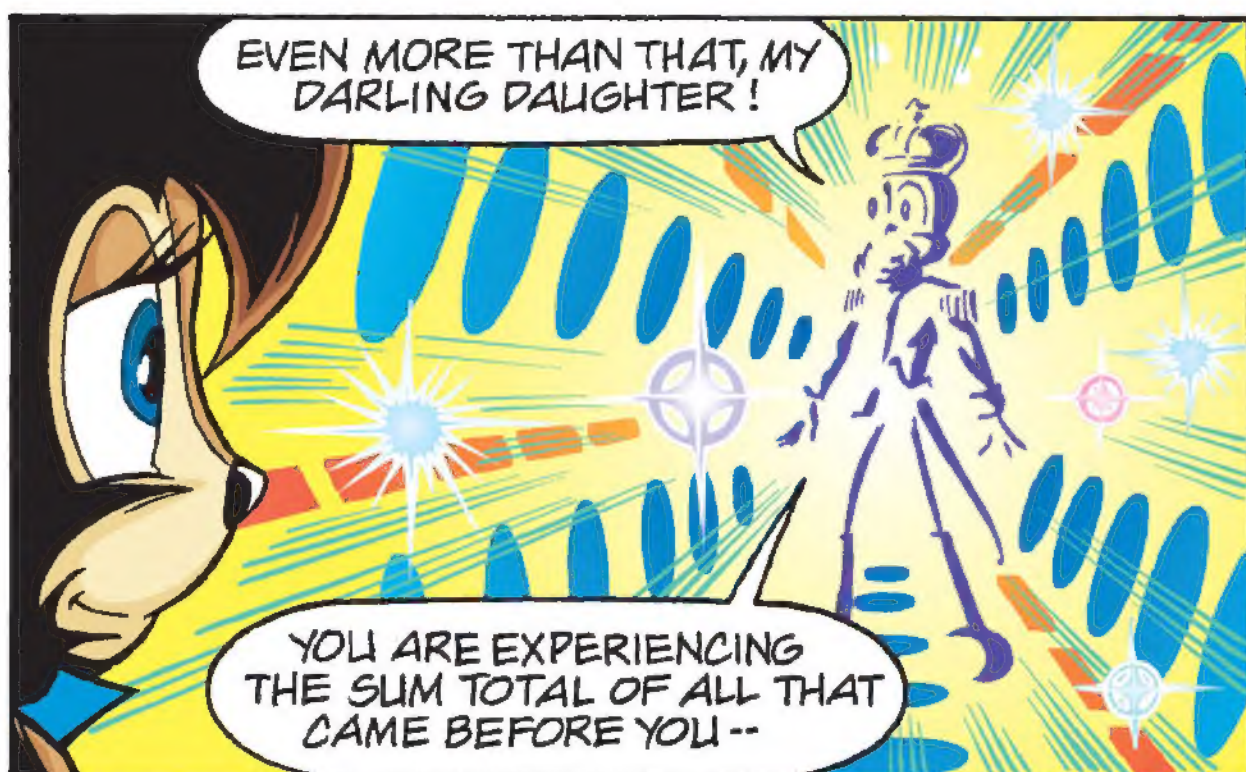
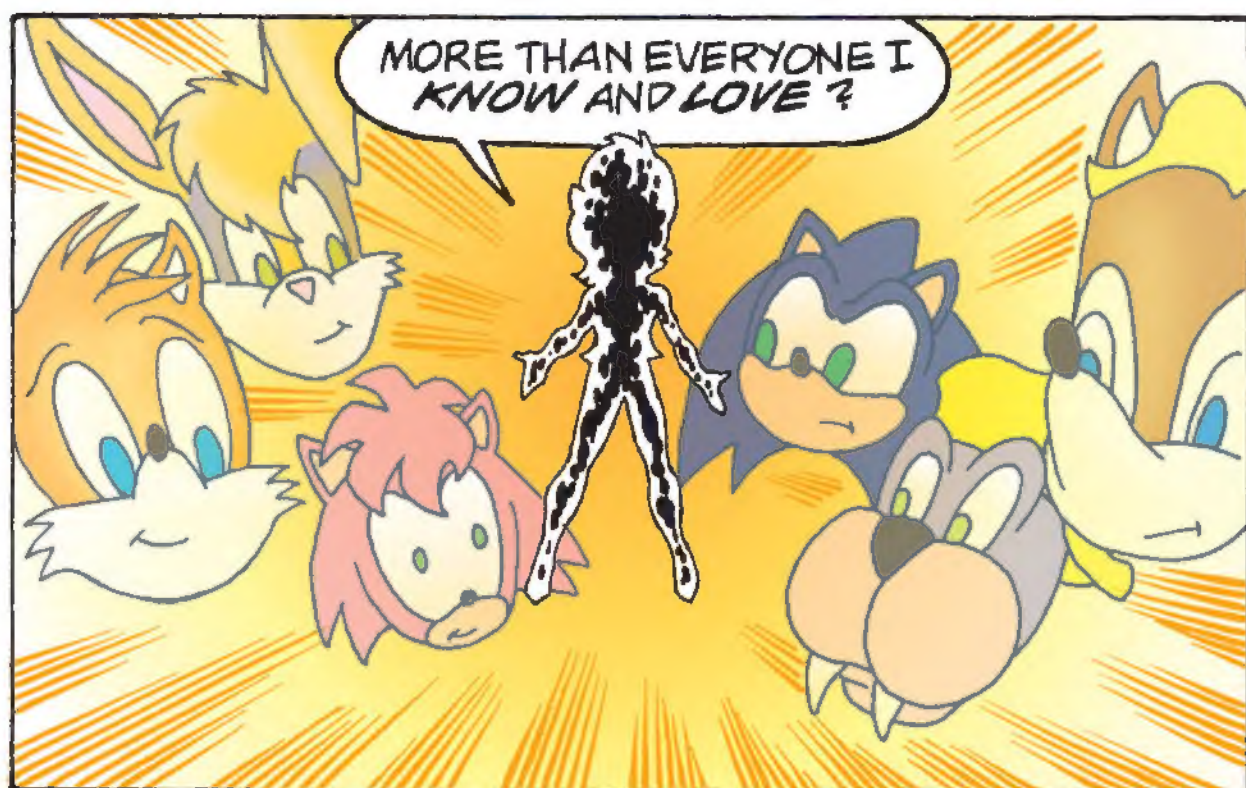
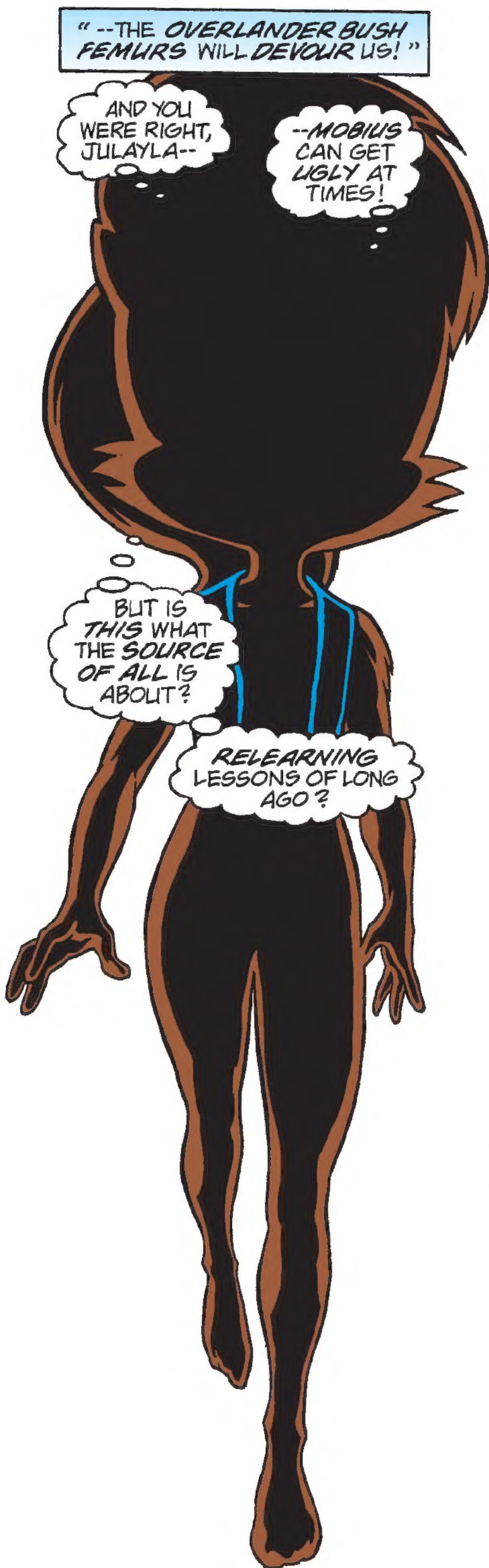
AND WHY NOT? *NATURE* HAD INTENDED IT SO!




SO WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH US AND THE OVERLANDERS?

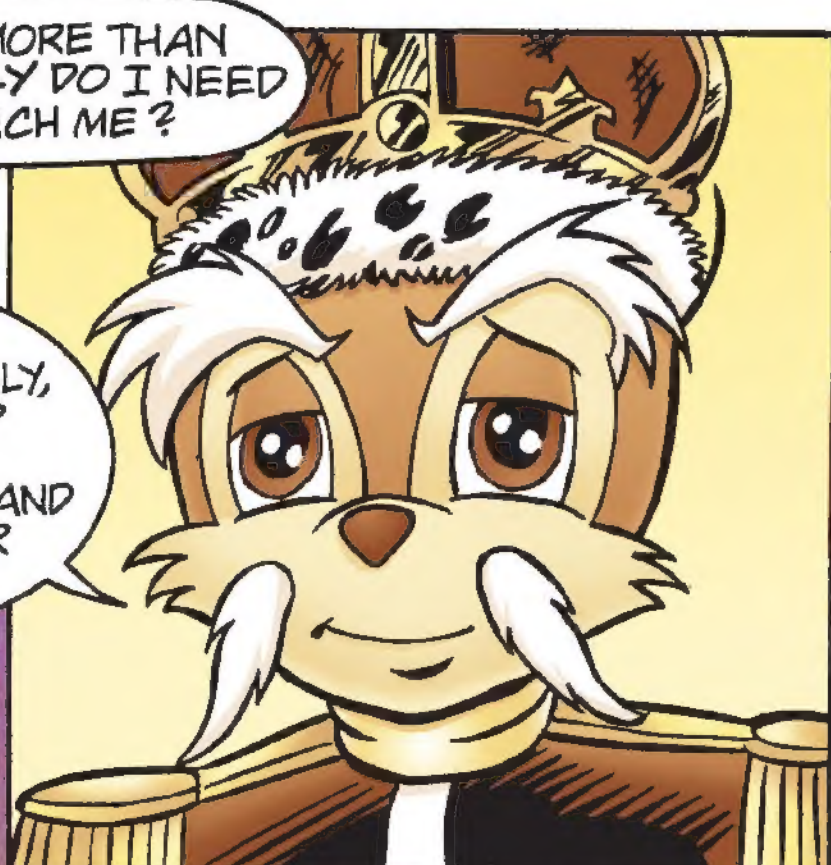
WE'RE THE *GOLDEN WINGSPANNERS*, SALLY, AND IF WE DON'T FIGHT BACK--



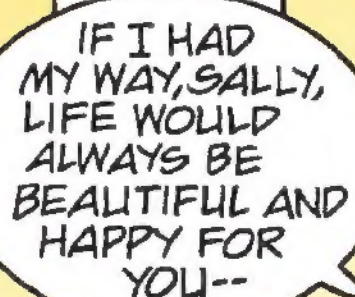




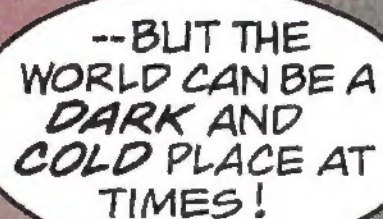
AFTER ALL, I HAD YOU
AND ROSIE AND JULAYLA
SET THE EXAMPLE!



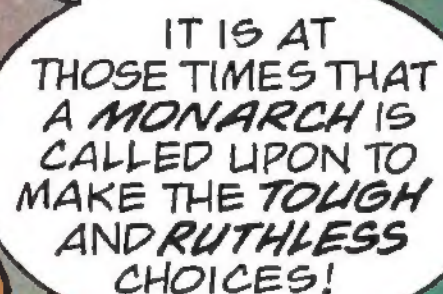
WHAT MORE THAN
MY *FAMILY* DO I NEED
TO TEACH ME?




IF I HAD
MY WAY, SALLY,
LIFE WOULD
ALWAYS BE
BEAUTIFUL AND
HAPPY FOR
YOU--



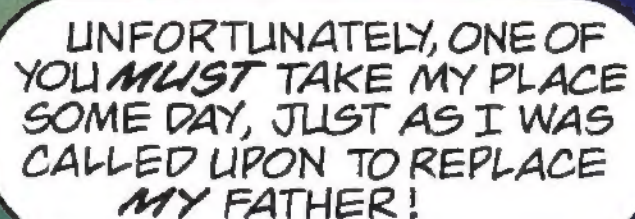
--BUT THE
WORLD CAN BE A
DARK AND
COLD PLACE AT
TIMES!



IT IS AT
THOSE TIMES THAT
A *MONARCH* IS
CALLED UPON TO
MAKE THE *TOUGH*
AND *RUTHLESS*
CHOICES!



I HAD
HOPED I COULD
SPARE YOU AND
YOUR BROTHER
THIS!



UNFORTUNATELY, ONE OF
YOU *MUST* TAKE MY PLACE
SOME DAY, JUST AS I WAS
CALLED UPON TO REPLACE
MY FATHER!



MY *BROTHER*! WHY
IS IT YOU NEVER *TOLD* ME
ABOUT *HIM*, FATHER?



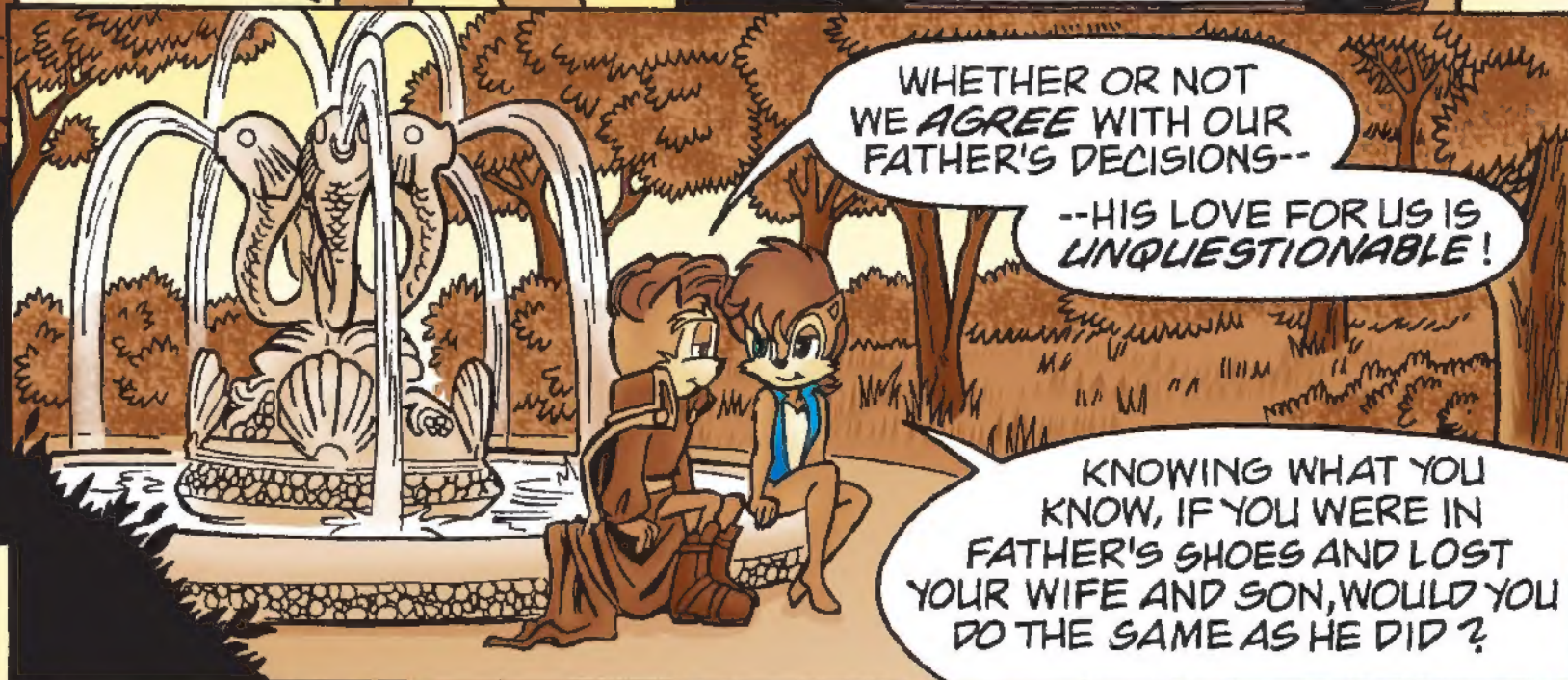
BECAUSE HE *COULDN'T*, SALLY!

HE
DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT BECAME
OF MOTHER
AND I--

--SO HE
BELIEVED
ANYTHING HE
SAID WOULD
ONLY *HURT*
YOU!
SINCE
YOU WERE THE
ONLY
FAMILY HE HAD
LEFT--



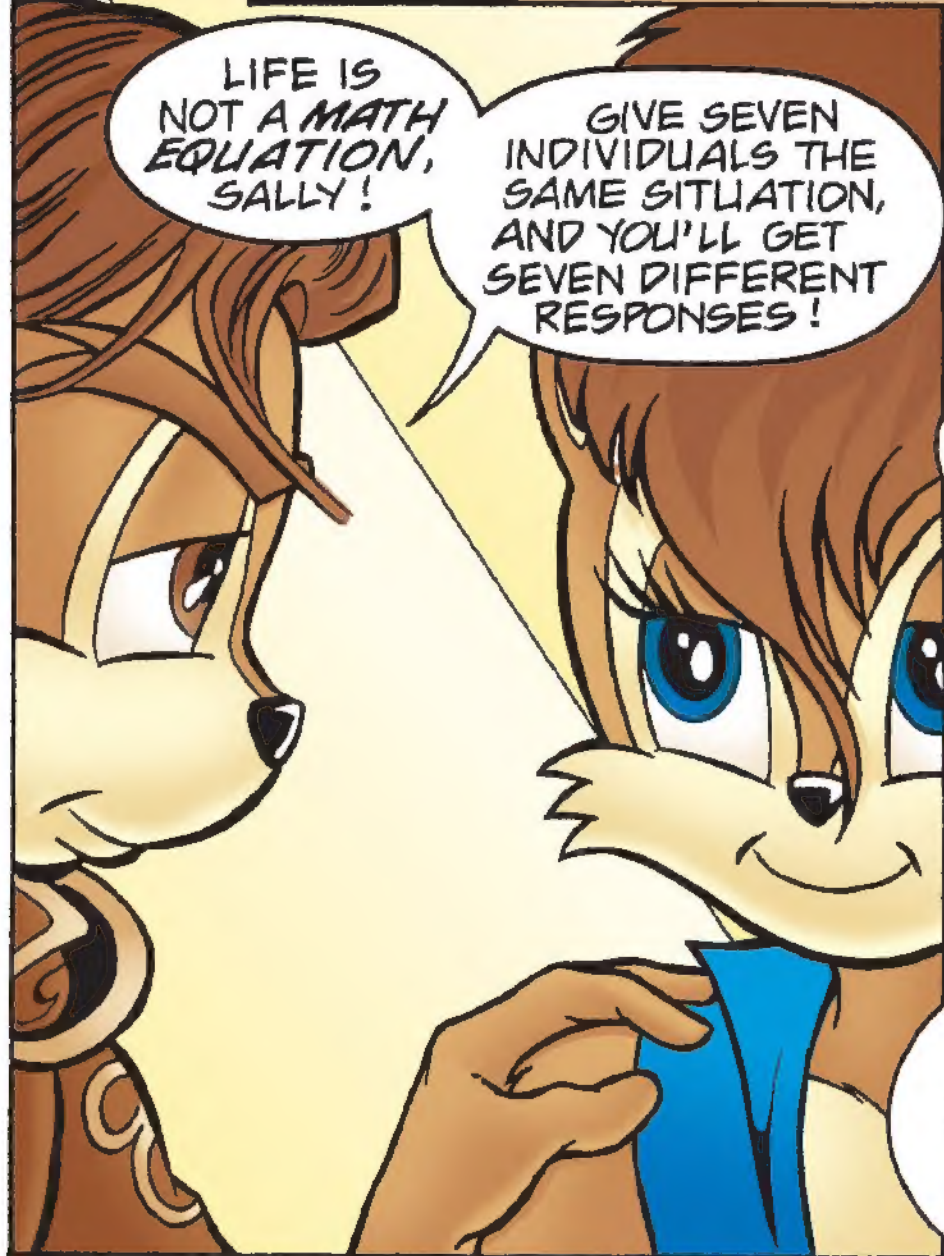
--*PROTECTING* YOU
FROM EVERYTHING WAS ALWAYS
HIS *FIRST PRIORITY*!



WHETHER OR NOT
WE *AGREE* WITH OUR
FATHER'S DECISIONS--

--HIS LOVE FOR US IS
UNQUESTIONABLE!

KNOWING WHAT YOU
KNOW, IF YOU WERE IN
FATHER'S SHOES AND LOST
YOUR WIFE AND SON, WOULD YOU
DO THE SAME AS HE DID?



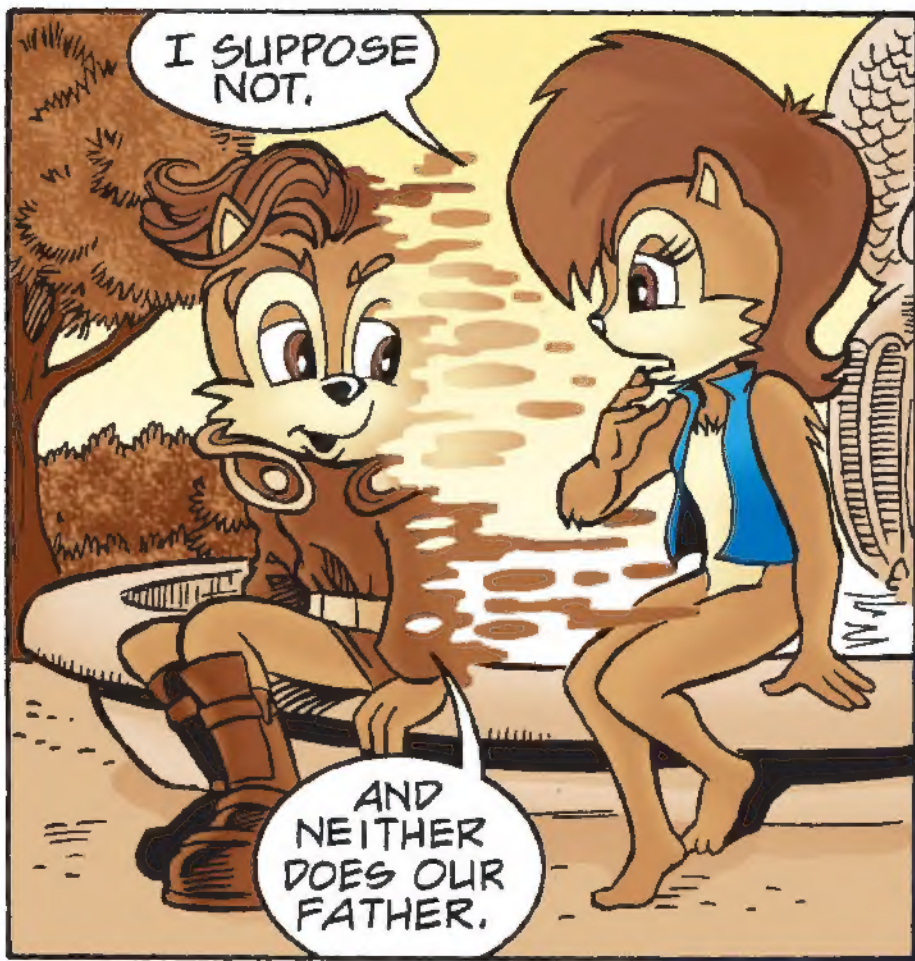
LIFE IS
NOT A *MATH*
EQUATION,
SALLY!

GIVE SEVEN
INDIVIDUALS THE
SAME SITUATION,
AND YOU'LL GET
SEVEN DIFFERENT
RESPONSES!

THE *BEST*
ONES, THOUGH,
COME FROM THE
HEART!

WHEN YOU
HAVE TO MAKE
A *DIFFICULT*
DECISION, DOES
THAT MEAN
YOU CARE ANY
LESS?





I SUPPOSE NOT.

AND NEITHER DOES OUR FATHER.



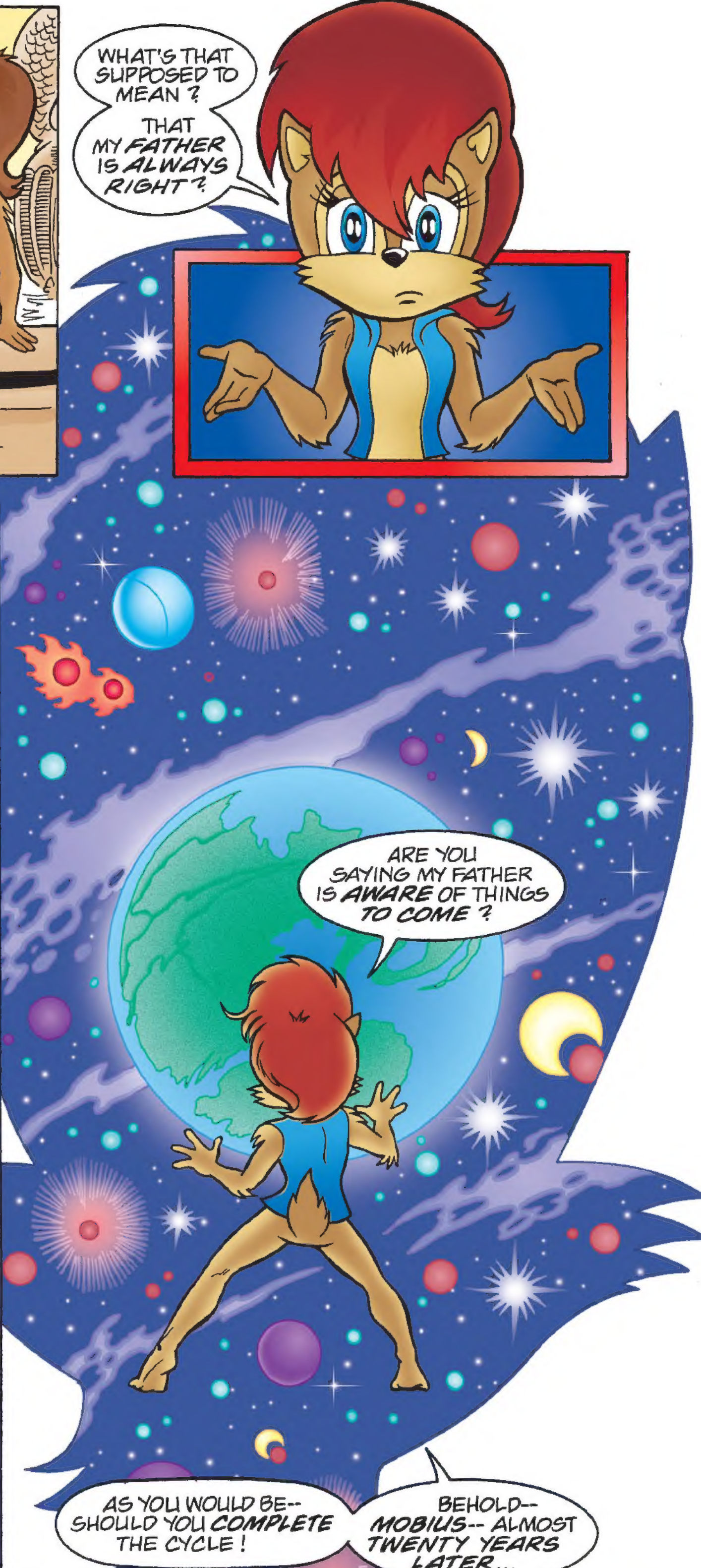
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
THAT MY FATHER IS ALWAYS RIGHT?



YOUR FATHER IS *ONE* WITH THE *SOURCE*, FULLY AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF EACH ACTION HE TAKES!

⚡GASP⚡
THAT'S--THAT'S ME AS THE QUEEN!

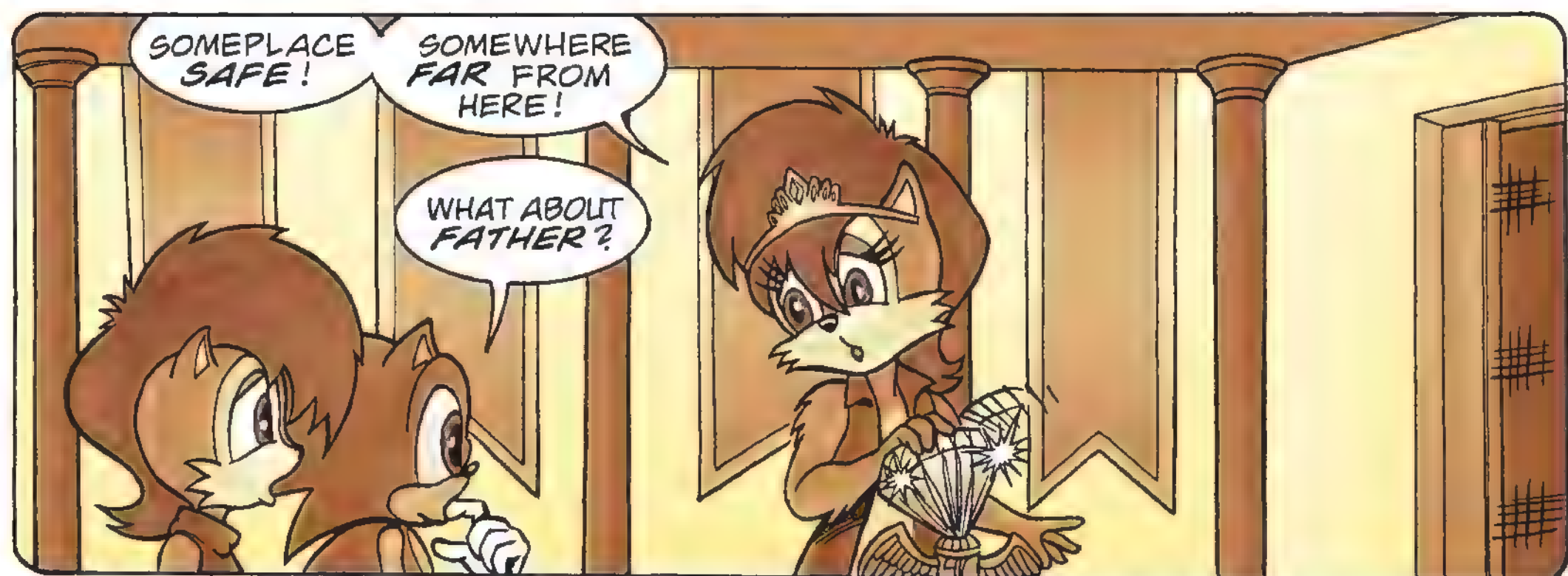
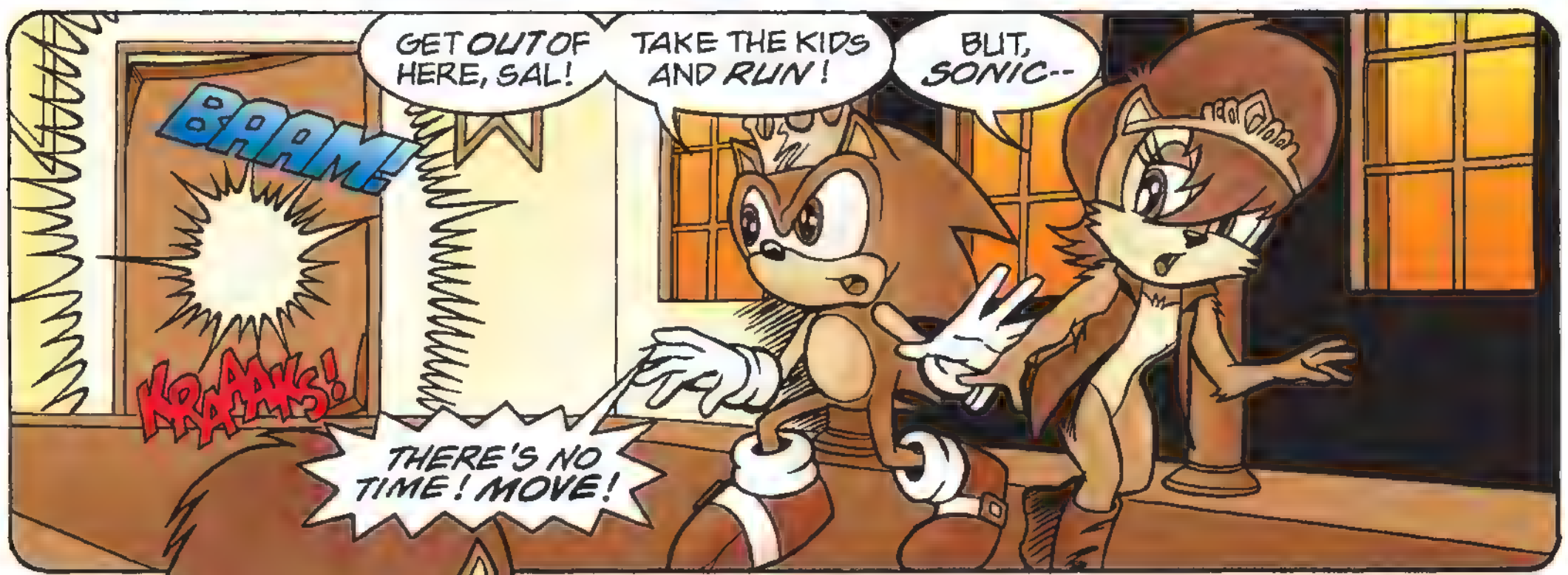
NOTHING THAT ONE WHO IS BOUND WITH THE *SOURCE* DOES IS EVER DONE LIGHTLY!

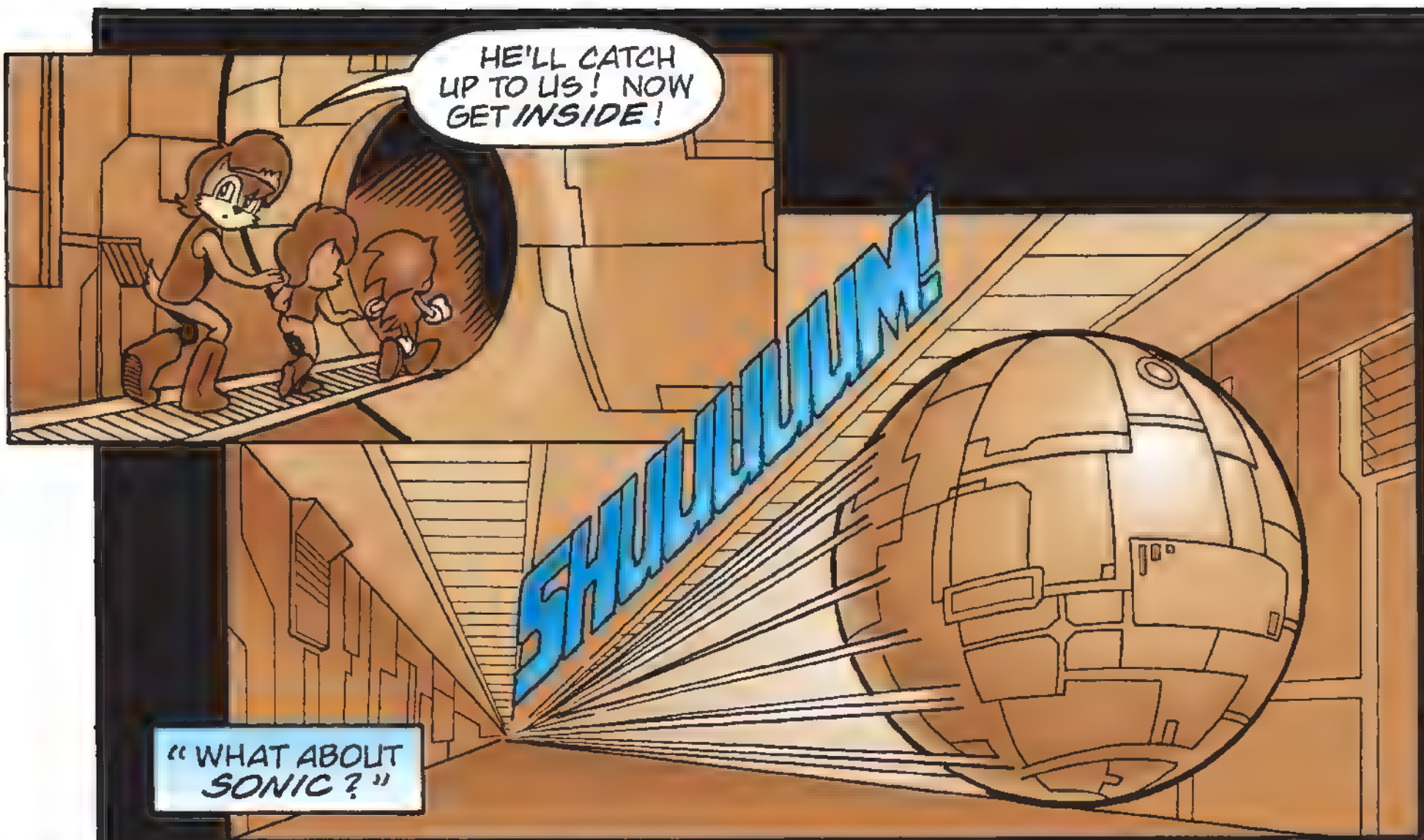


ARE YOU SAYING MY FATHER IS *AWARE* OF THINGS TO COME?

AS YOU WOULD BE-- SHOULD YOU *COMPLETE* THE CYCLE!

BEHOLD-- *MOBIUS*-- ALMOST TWENTY YEARS LATER...





HE'LL CATCH
UP TO US! NOW
GET INSIDE!

"WHAT ABOUT
SONIC?"



YOU HAVEN'T
COMPLETED THE
CYCLE, CHILD!

YOU EITHER
SEE IT THROUGH OR
FOREVER FORFEIT
YOUR BIRTHRIGHT!

YOU MEAN
IT'S ALL OR
NOTHING?

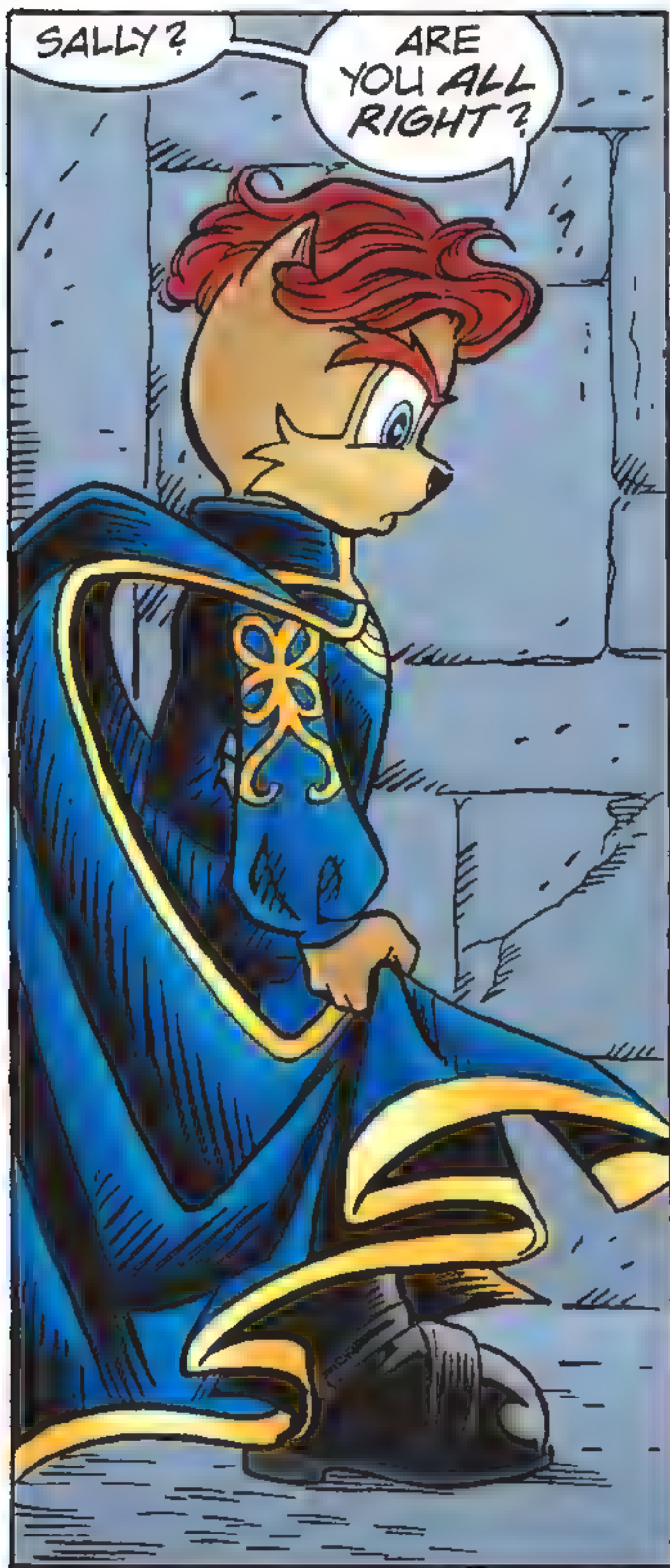
THAT IS
CORRECT.

I
GUESS THINGS
WEREN'T
MEANT TO BE,
THEN!

I'M NOT
SURE I WANT TO
KNOW EVERYTHING
IN ORDER TO BE
QUEEN!

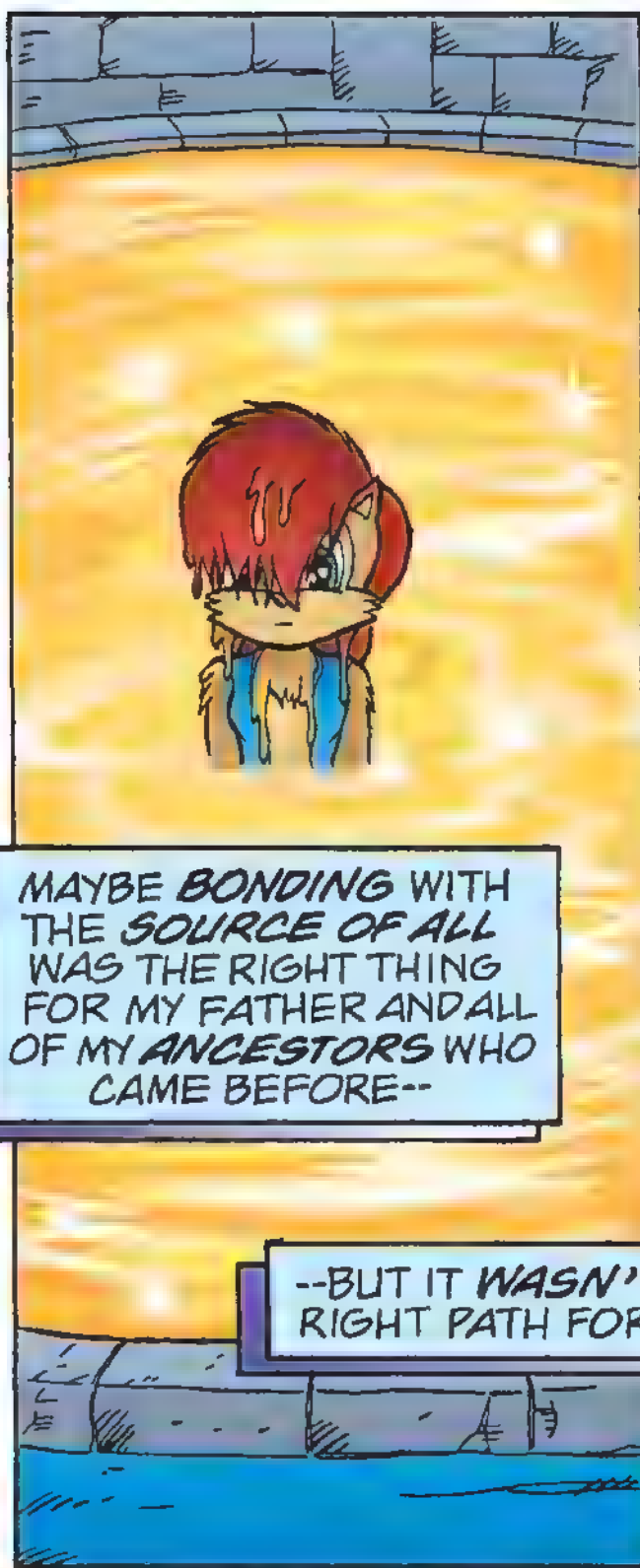
YOU REALIZE
THAT ONCE YOU MAKE
YOUR DECISION--

--THERE'S
NO TURNING
BACK?



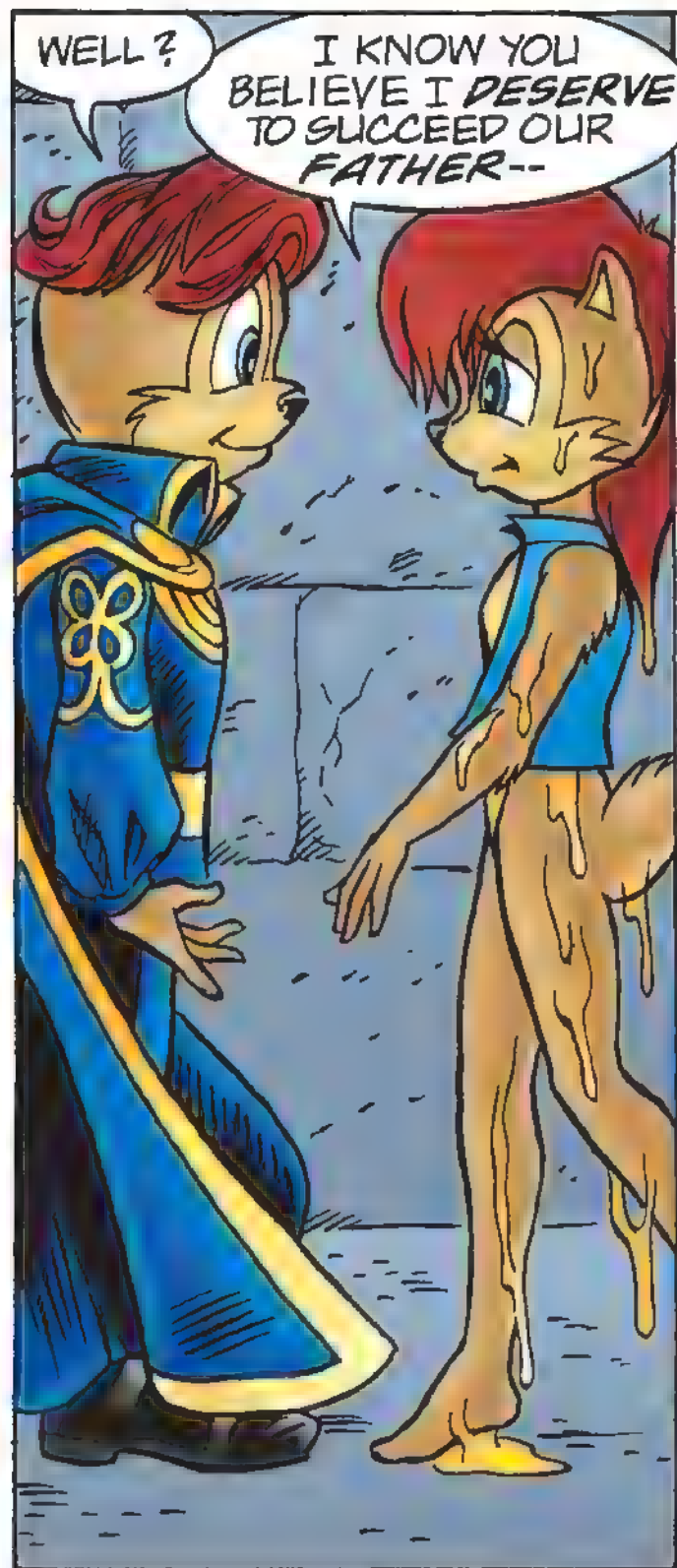
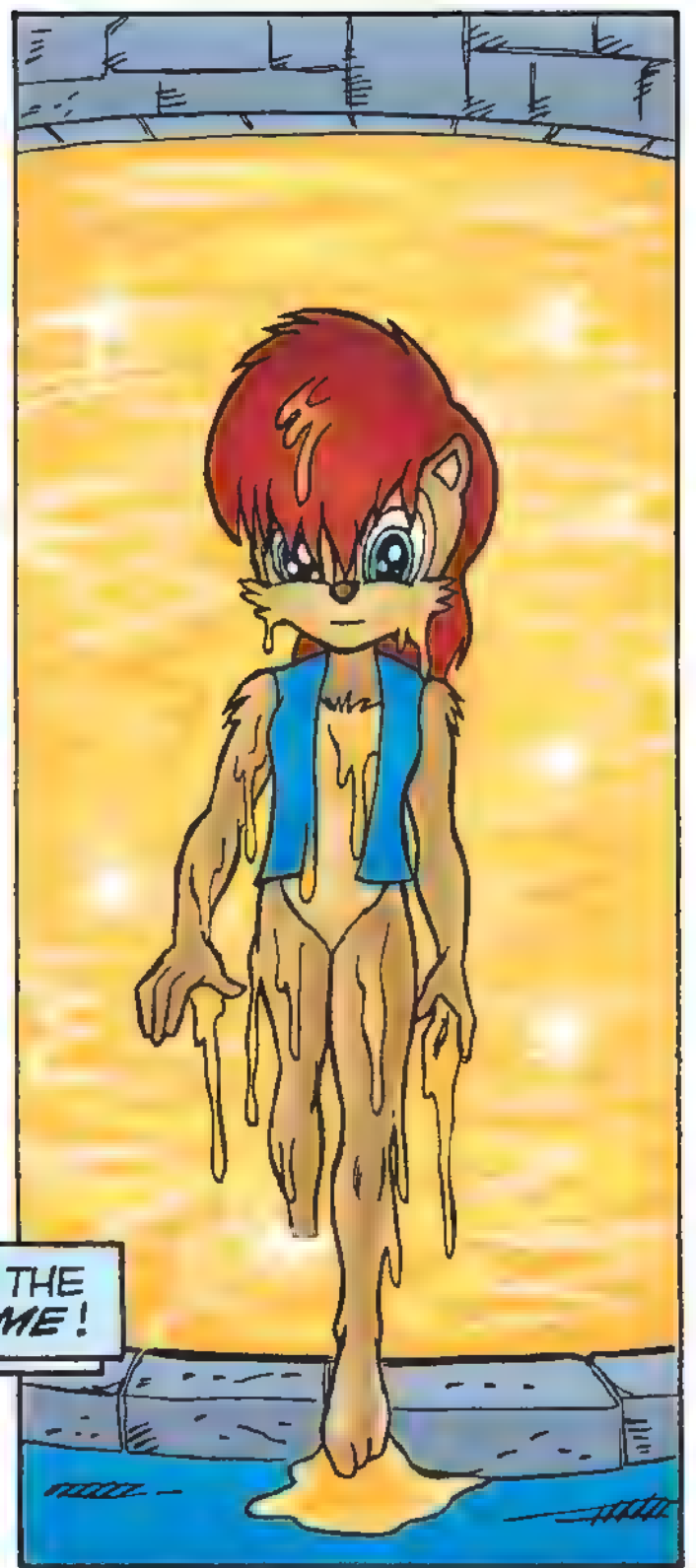
SALLY?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?



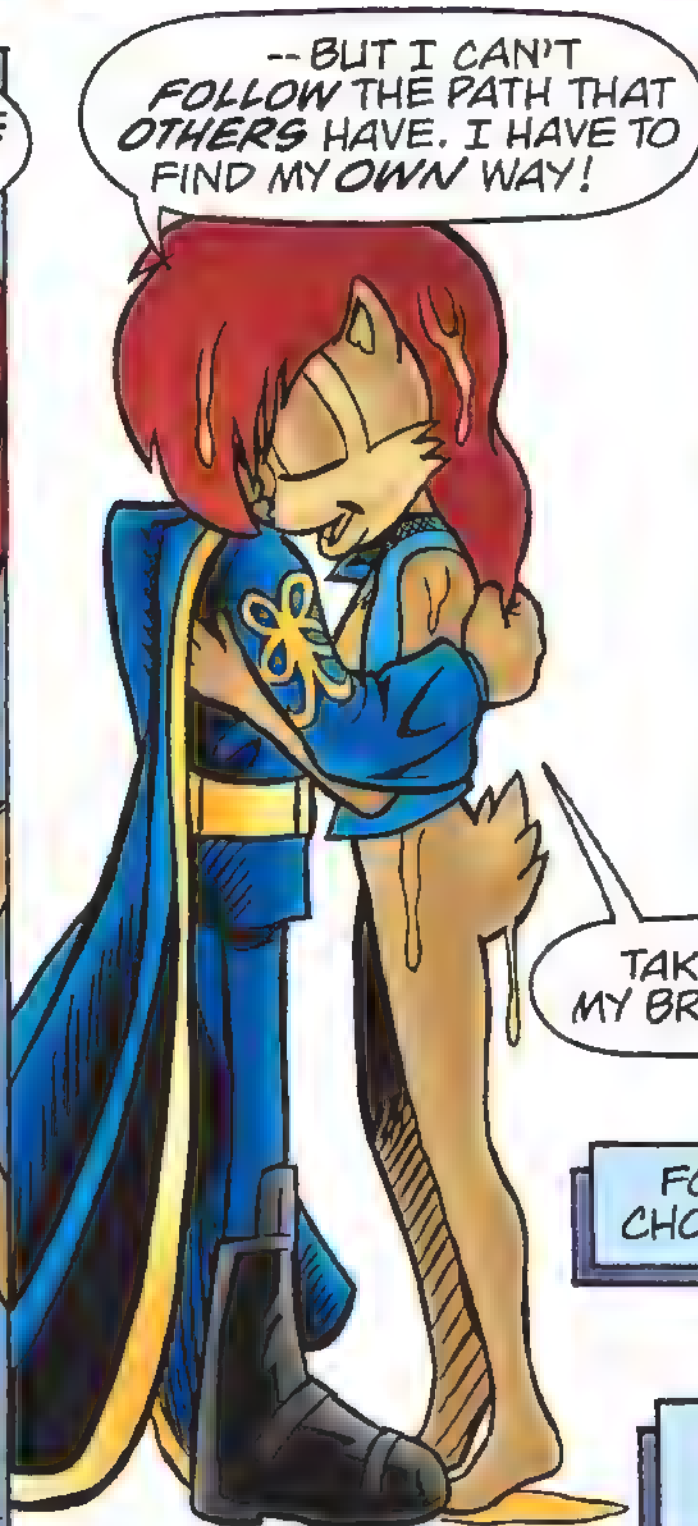
MAYBE *BONDING* WITH THE *SOURCE* OF ALL WAS THE RIGHT THING FOR MY FATHER AND ALL OF MY *ANCESTORS* WHO CAME BEFORE--

--BUT IT *WASN'T* THE RIGHT PATH FOR *ME*!



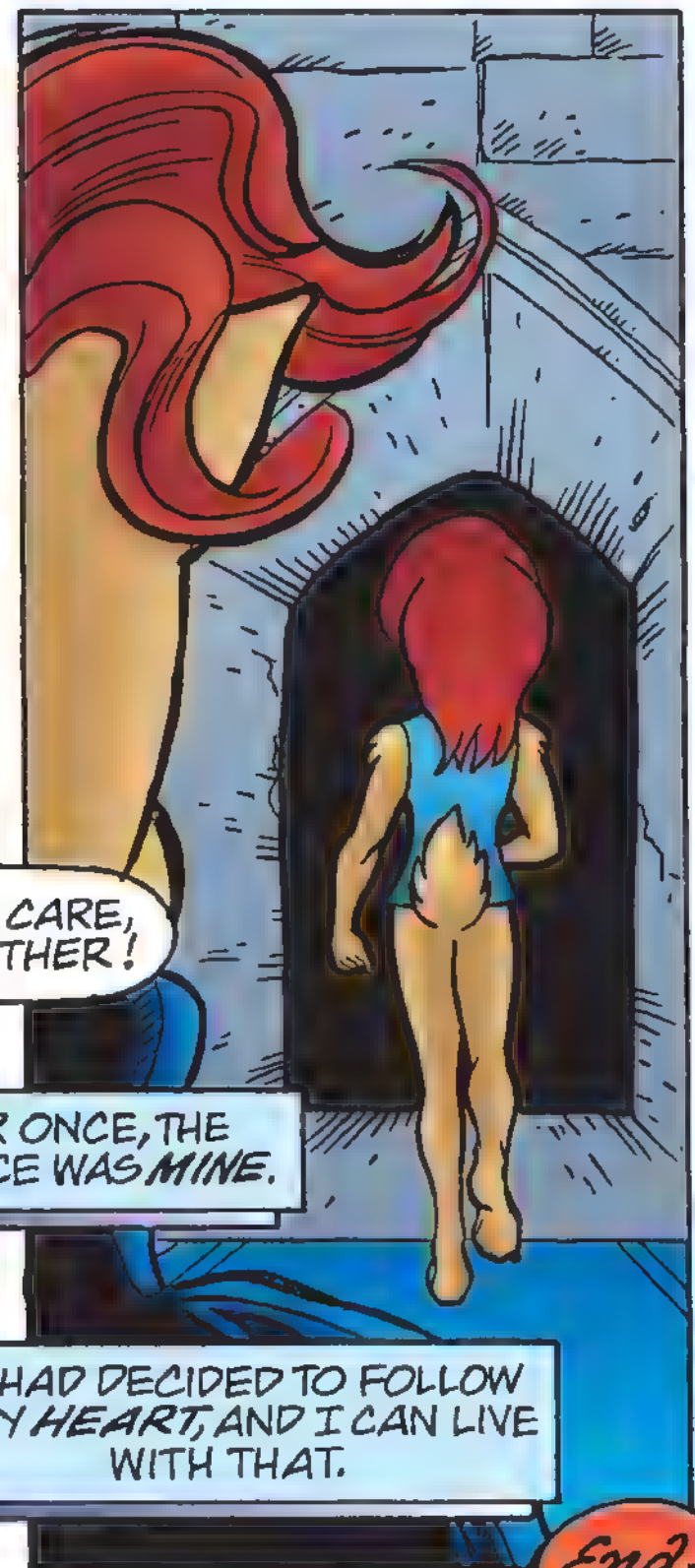
WELL?

I KNOW YOU BELIEVE I *DESERVE* TO SUCCEED OUR *FATHER*--



--BUT I CAN'T FOLLOW THE PATH THAT *OTHERS* HAVE. I HAVE TO FIND MY *OWN* WAY!


TAKE CARE, MY BROTHER!



FOR ONCE, THE CHOICE WAS *MINE*.

I HAD DECIDED TO FOLLOW MY *HEART*, AND I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.

End



IT'S STILL
NOT TOO LATE,
HERSH!

YOU CAN TAKE
POINT WHILE I GO
CRAWLING AROUND
THE *DRAGON'S*
DEN INSTEAD!

I *CAN* DO THIS,
COMMANDER!

GETTING THROUGH
THE *DUCTWORK* WILL
BE A LOT *SMOOTHER*
FOR ME THAN YOU!

BESIDES, YOU
WON'T BE ABLE TO
SUPERVISE US ON
EVERY MISSION!

SOONER OR LATER, YOU'RE
GOING TO HAVE TO ORDER US
TO GO...

HERSHEY™ **SOLO**



I CAN SEE IT'S *USELESS* TO ARGUE WITH YOU!

JUST MAKE SURE YOU *RETURN* IN *ONE PIECE*!

I HAVE *NINE* LIVES, COMMANDER!

WHAT COULD GO SO *WRONG*?

EVERYTHING --



" -- SO HERE'S HOPING *NOTHING* DOES!"

WELL, HERE GOES, GIRL --



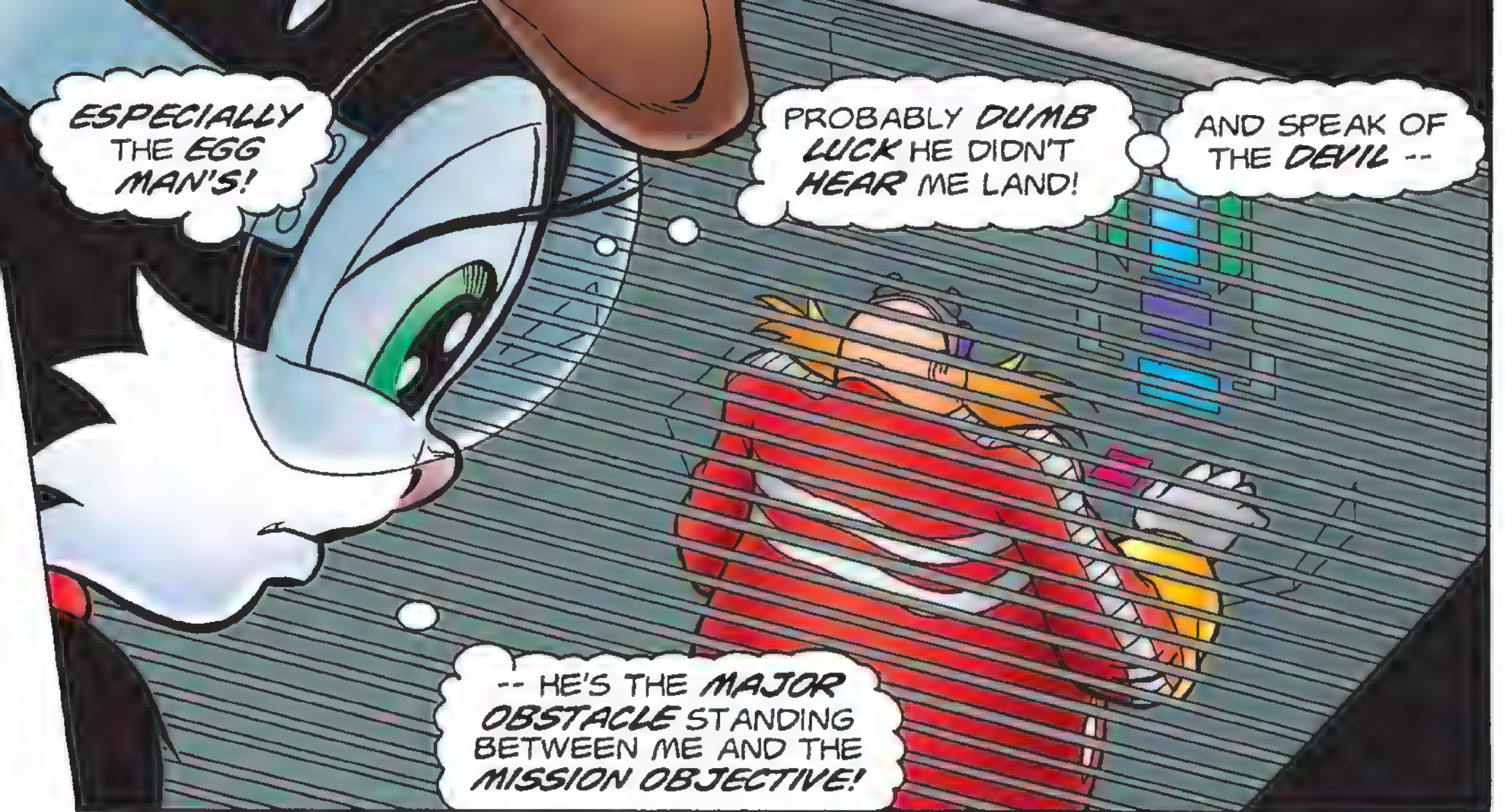
IT'S *SHOW TIME*!



CAREFUL, *HERSH*!

WHUMF!

YOU DON'T WANT TO DRAW *ATTENTION* AFTER MAKING IT SO FAR!



Ka-BOOM!

SO THE
RODENTS ARE
GETTING **FRISKY**,
ARE THEY?

KUKU!

**DELTA TWO
AND NINE!**

ROGER!

WILCO!

TAKE A
SQUADRON OF
SHADOWBOTS AND
GO PUT OUT THE
FIRE!

AND SHOULD
YOU **ENCOUNTER**
THAT WRETCHED
HEDGEHOG
SONIC --

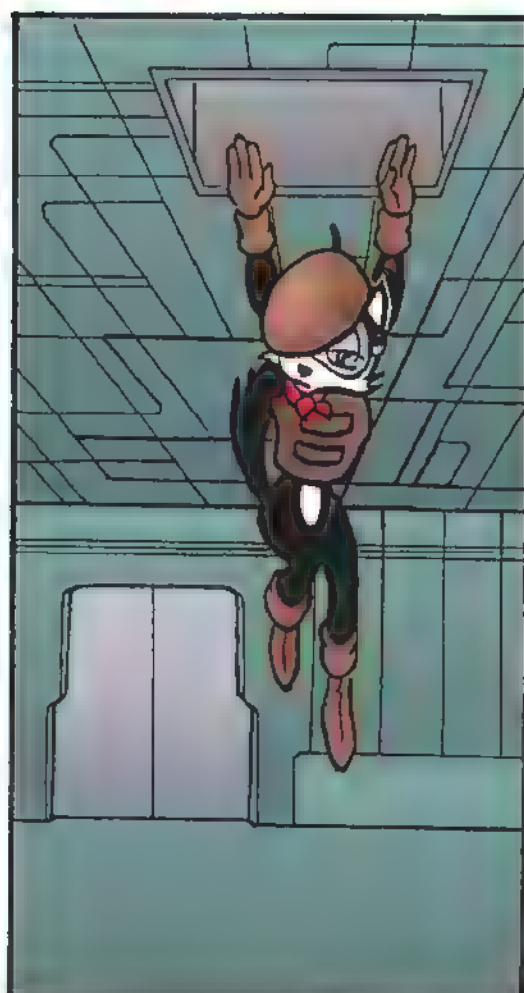
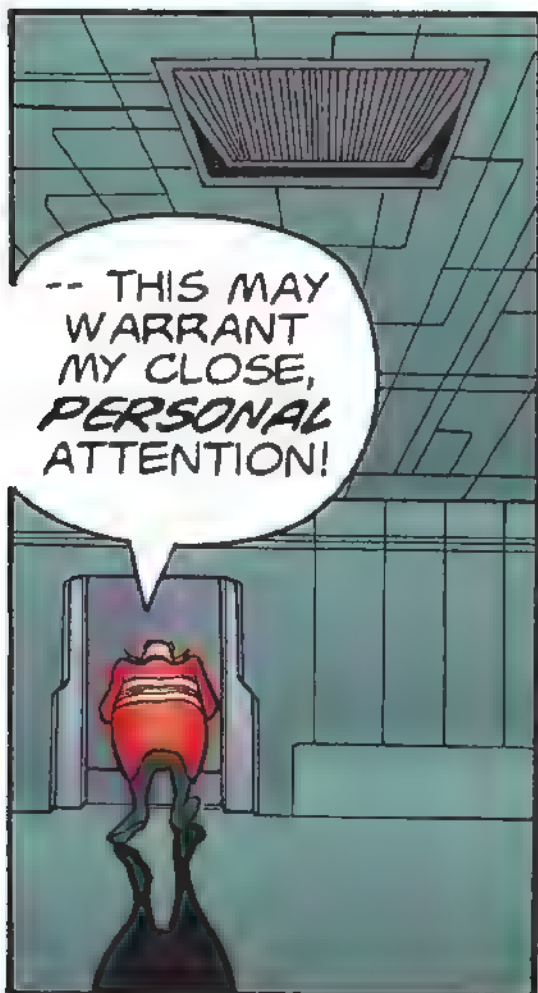
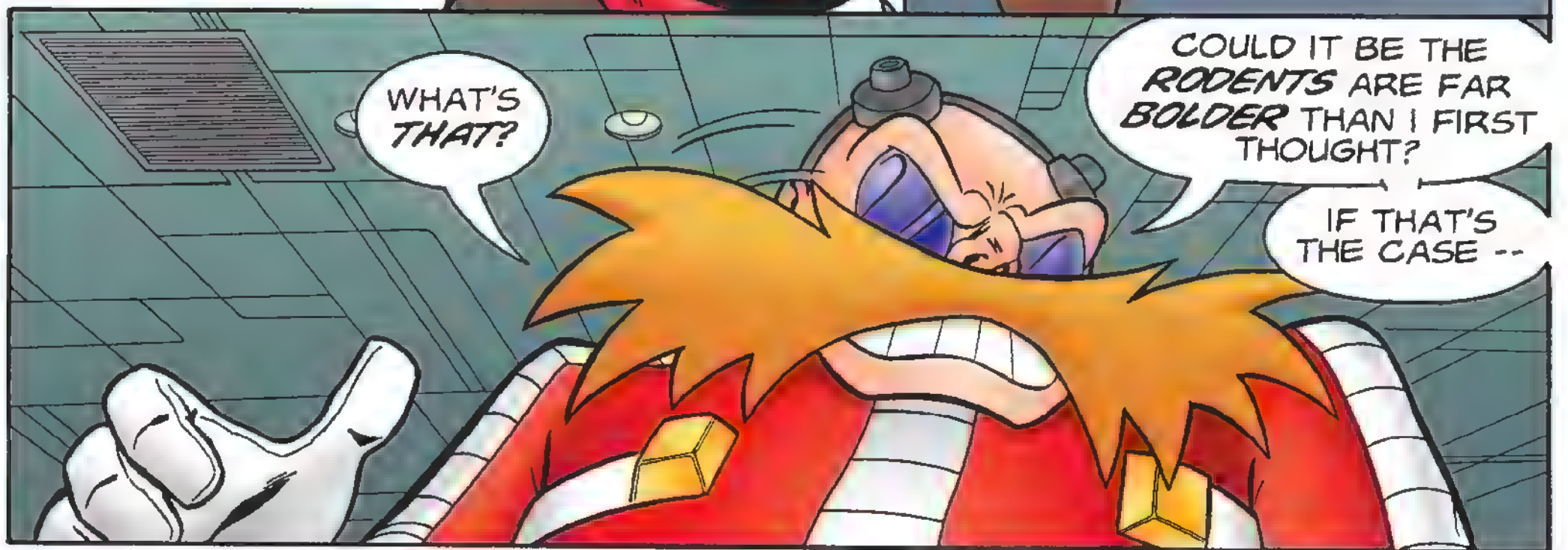
-- BRING
HIM TO
ME!

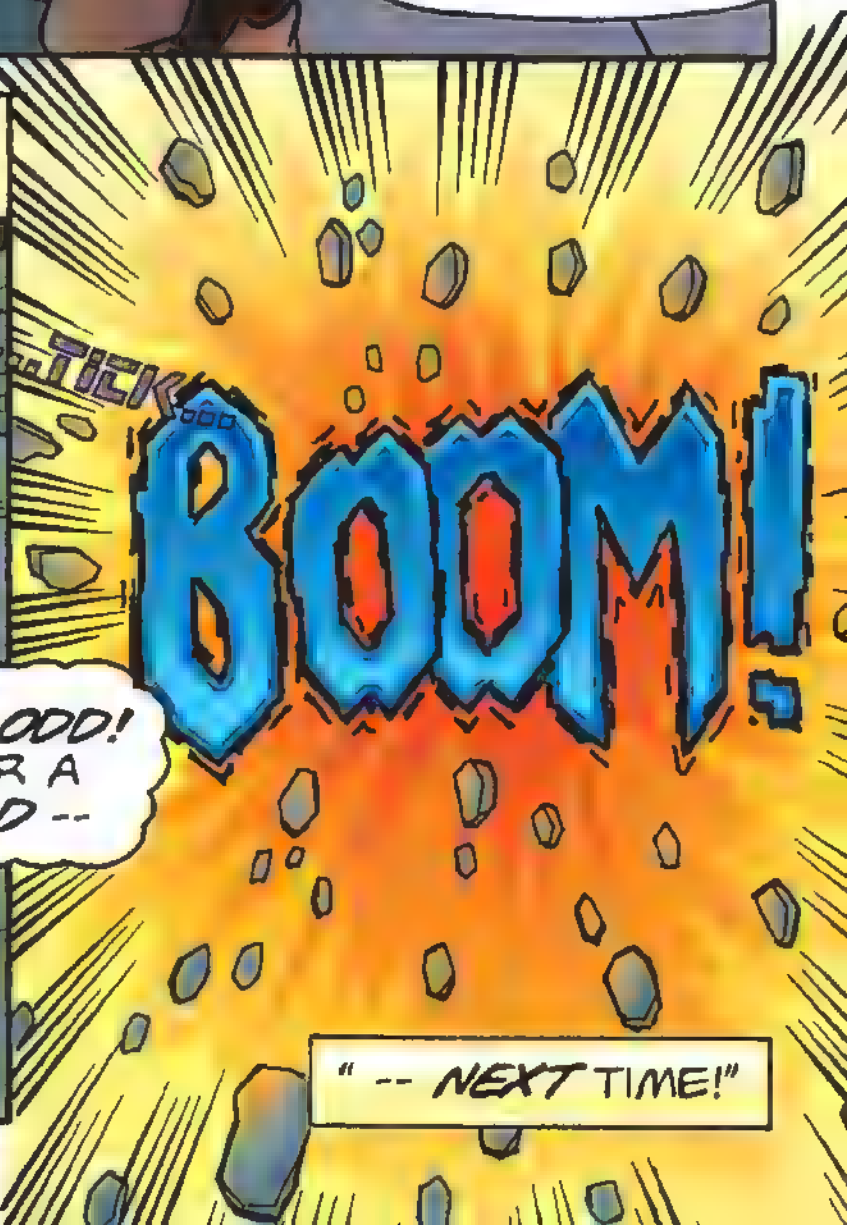
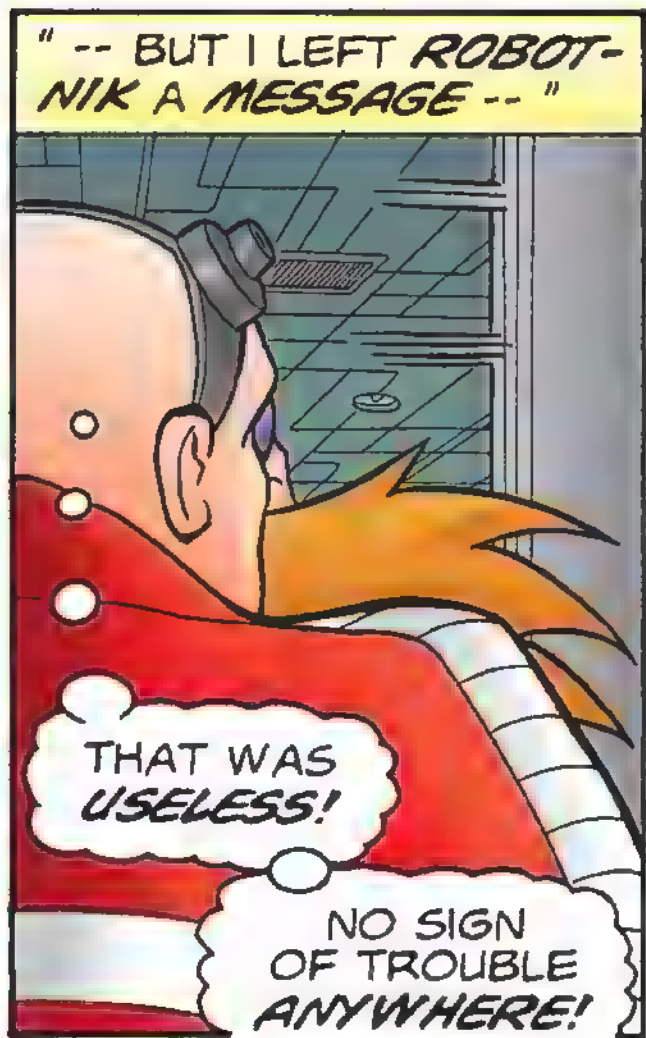
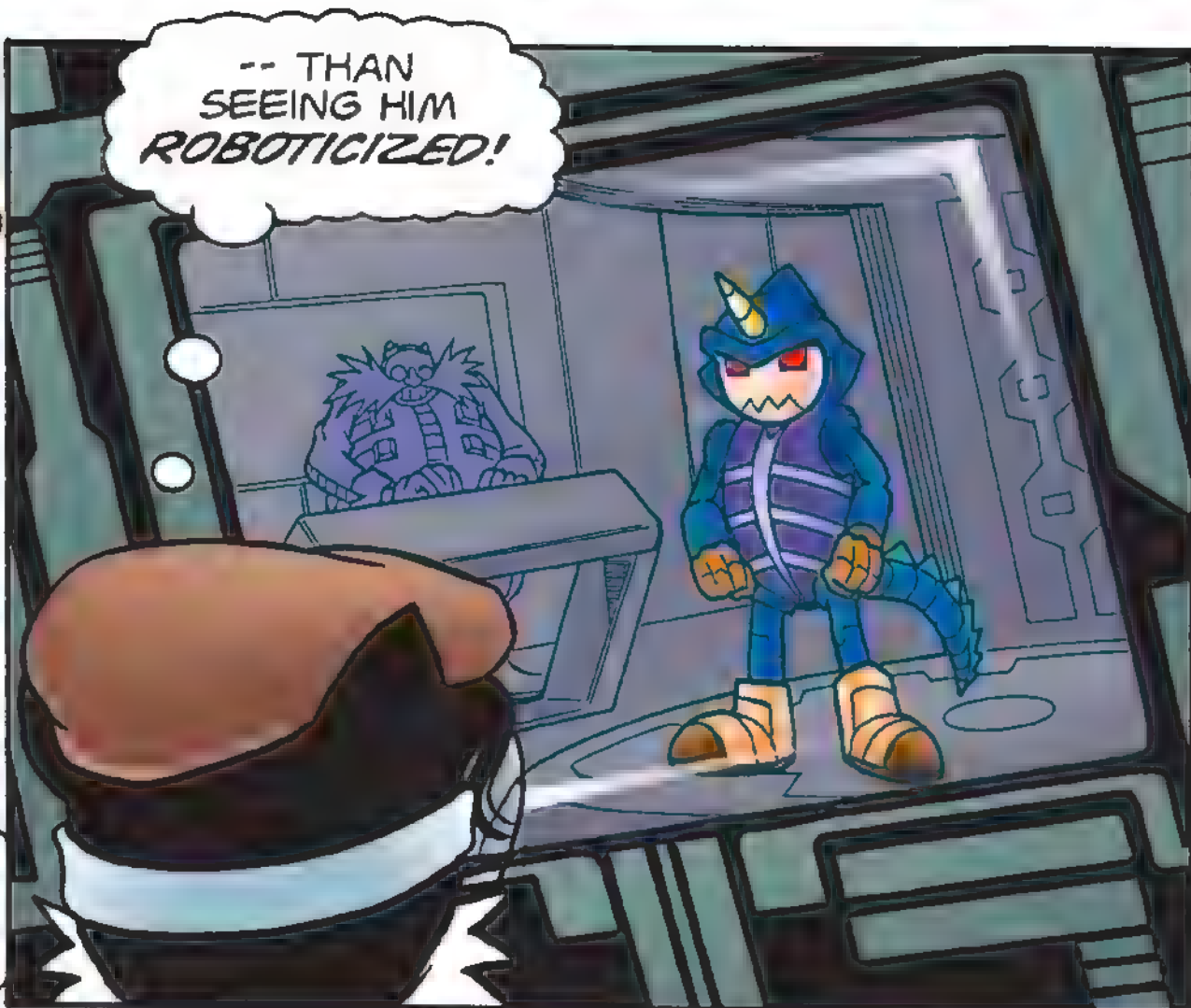
THAT SURE
DID THE TRICK
-- **NOT!**

SO
WHAT
NOW?

WHAT IF THE
THREAT WERE
MORE --
LOCAL?

HMMM...





LUPE AND THE WOLF PACK

FAMILY

SOMEWHERE OUT IN THE WESTERN FLATS...

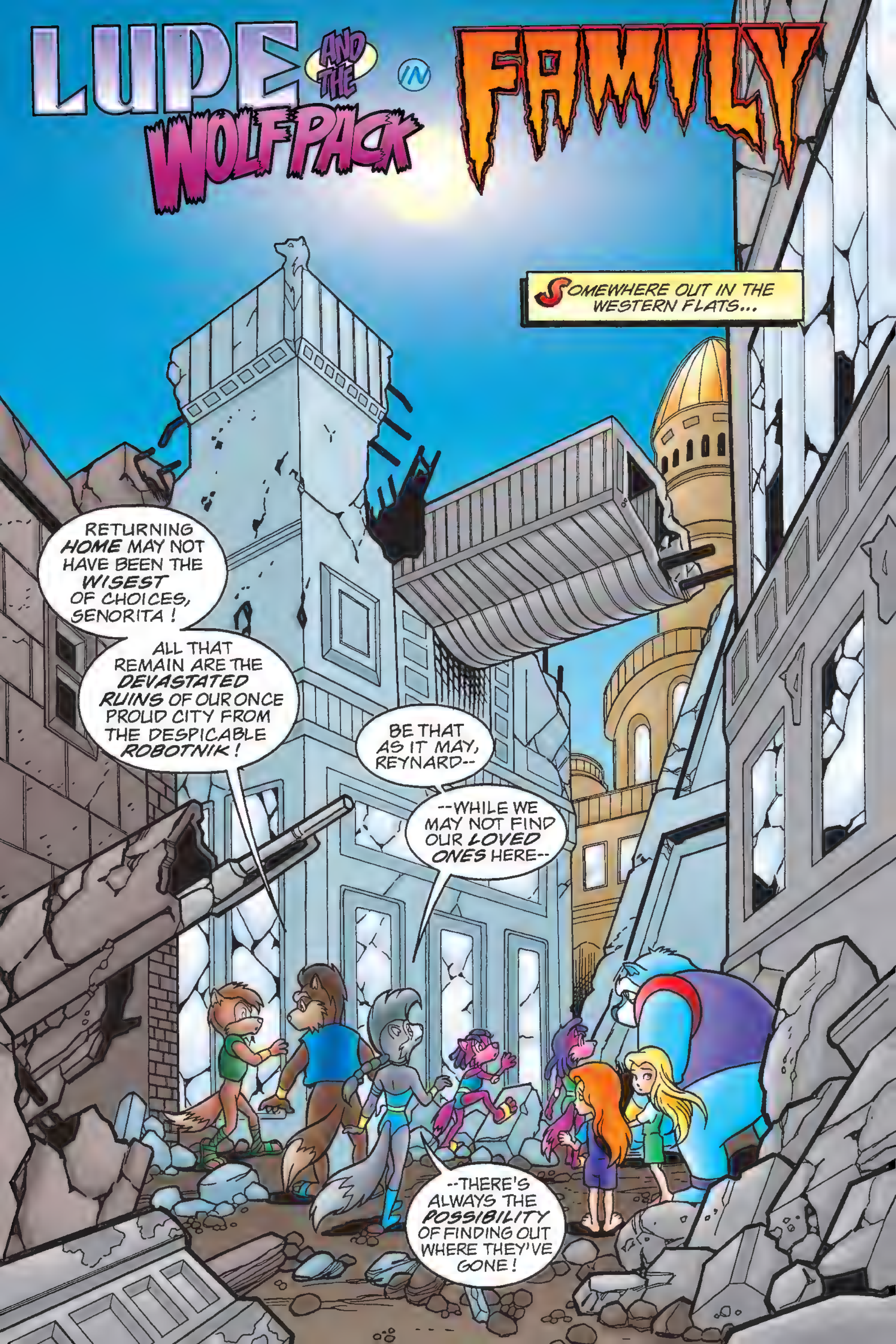
RETURNING HOME MAY NOT HAVE BEEN THE WISEST OF CHOICES, SENORITA!

ALL THAT REMAIN ARE THE DEVASTATED RUINS OF OUR ONCE PROUD CITY FROM THE DESPICABLE ROBOTNIK!

BE THAT AS IT MAY, REYNARD--

--WHILE WE MAY NOT FIND OUR LOVED ONES HERE--

--THERE'S ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY OF FINDING OUT WHERE THEY'VE GONE!





AS MUCH AS I WANT TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE--

--I CAN'T SEE A THING THAT GIVES ME HOPE!

DIABLO MAY HAVE A POINT, LUPE--



-- THERE MAY NOT BE ANYTHING LEFT FOR US TO FIND!

DON'T EVEN THINK IT, CANUS!



WE CAN PRESS ON WITH OUR SEARCH, SENORITA--

--BUT I, TOO, AM BEGINNING TO FEEL IT WILL ALL BE IN VAIN!



I CAN'T BLAME ANY OF YOU FOR FEELING THE WAY YOU DO!

BUT I KNOW LOBO--

--AND I KNOW HE WOULD NEVER GO WITHOUT LEAVING BEHIND SOME SIGN FOR ME!



FWOOOOSH!



B-TUUM!
GAS!

EVERYBODY!! HOLD--YOUR--NOSE...



WHERE
THE HECK
ARE WE?

SOME
PLACE WHERE
THE
PLUMBING IS
IN DESPERATE
NEED OF
REPAIR WOULD
BE MY FIRST
GUESS!

WHILE I CAN
APPRECIATE THE NEED
FOR *LEVITY* AT A TIME
LIKE THIS, I THINK WE'RE
HAVING COMPANY!

THAT
SOUNDS LIKE
METAL
CLANGING ALONG
THE *CONCRETE*
FLOOR!

A
SWATBOT,
PERHAPS?

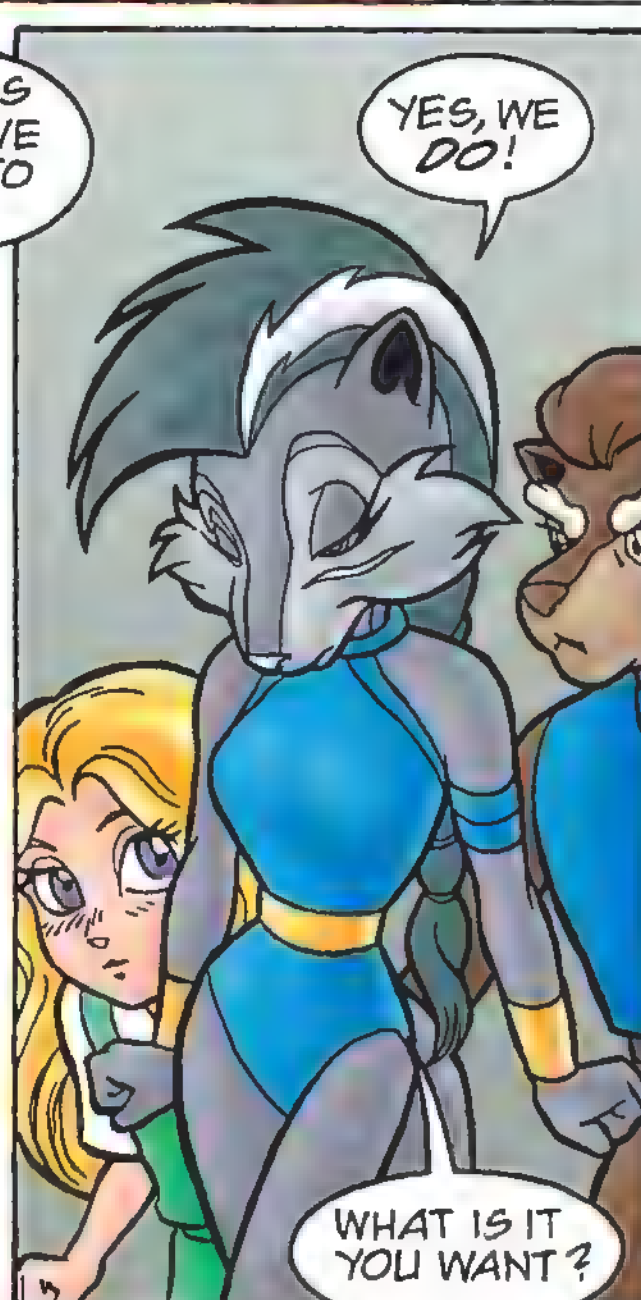
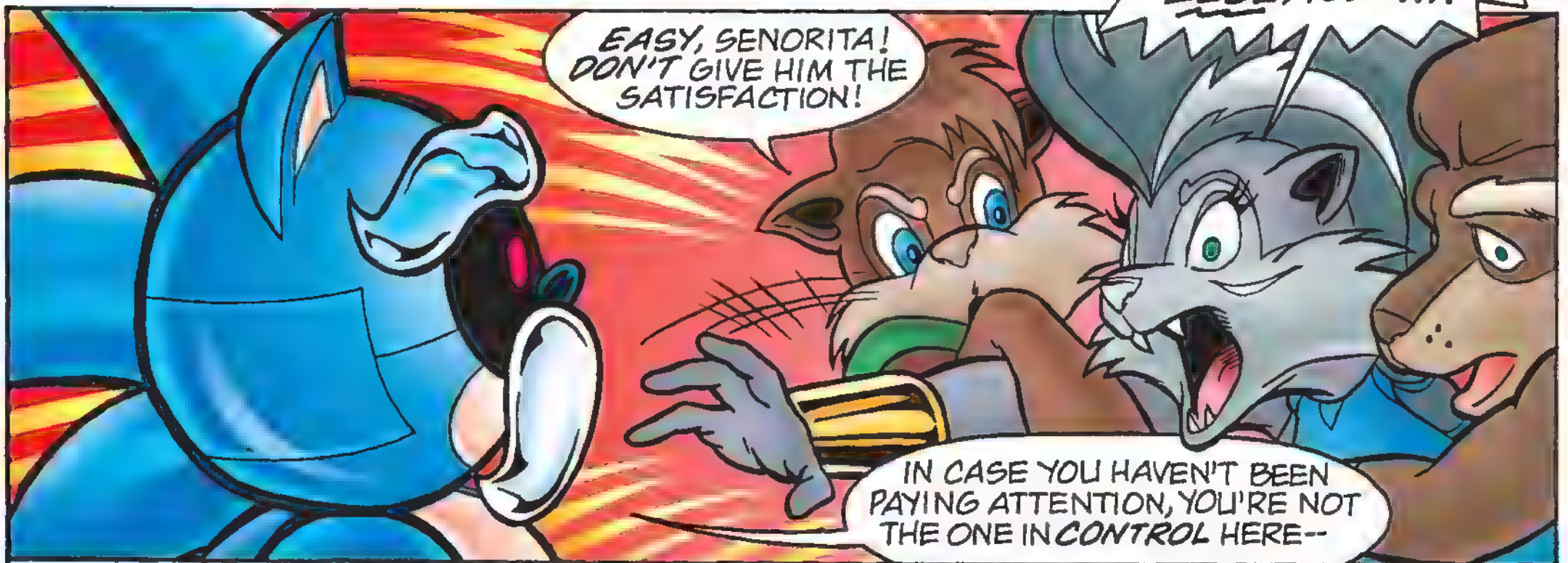
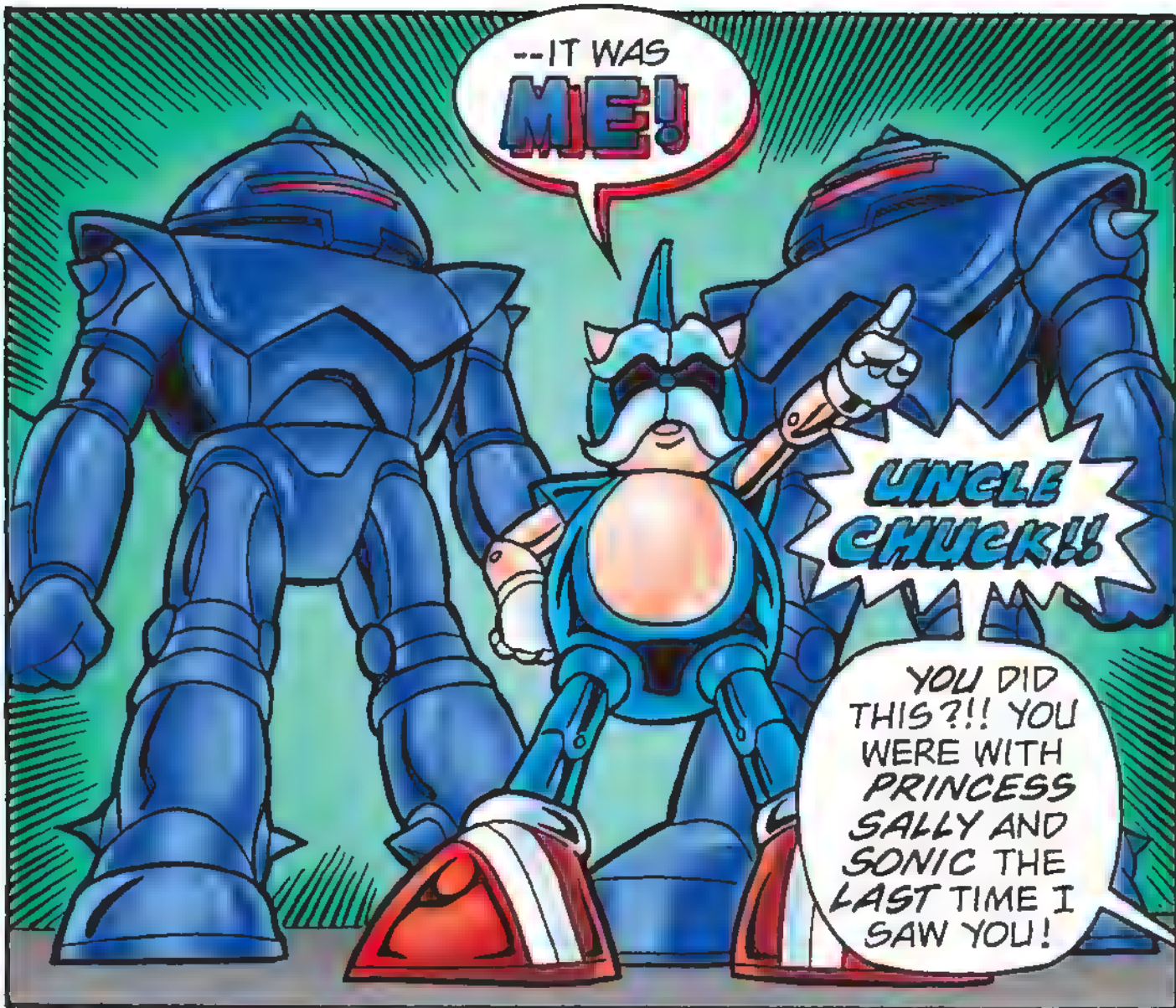
THEY'RE
NOT
SWAT-
BOTS!!

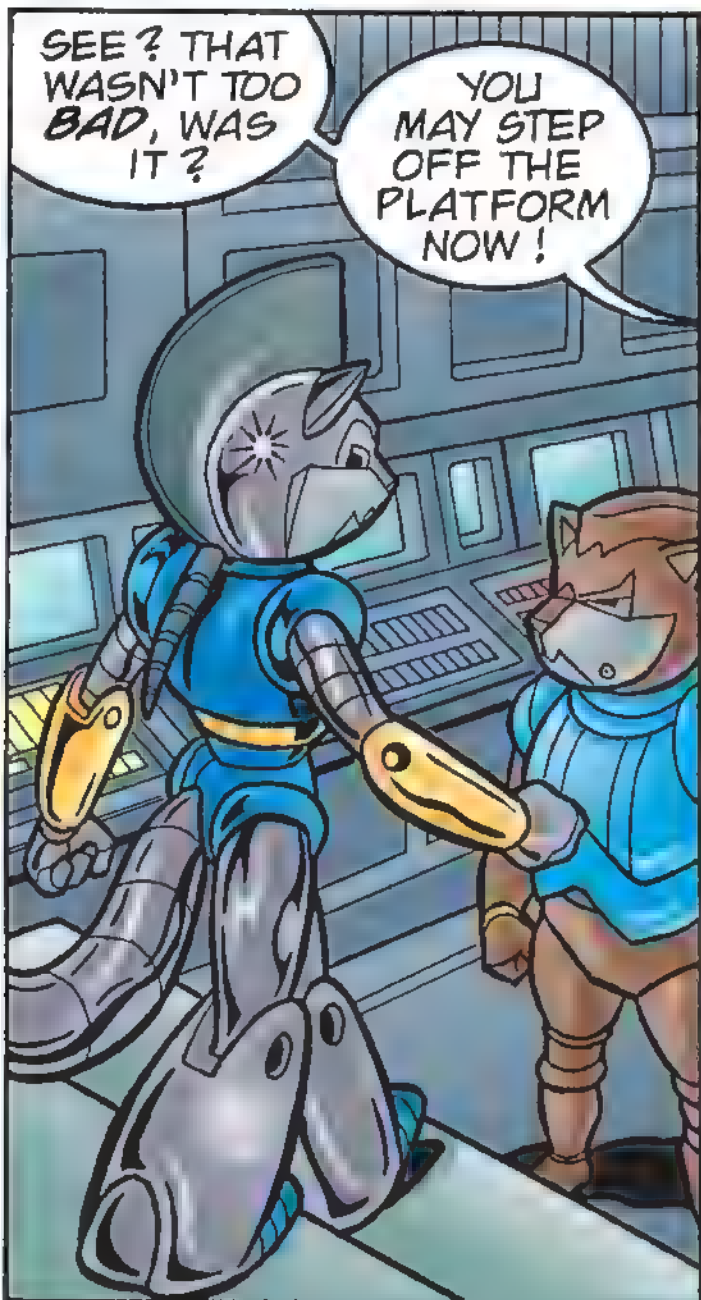
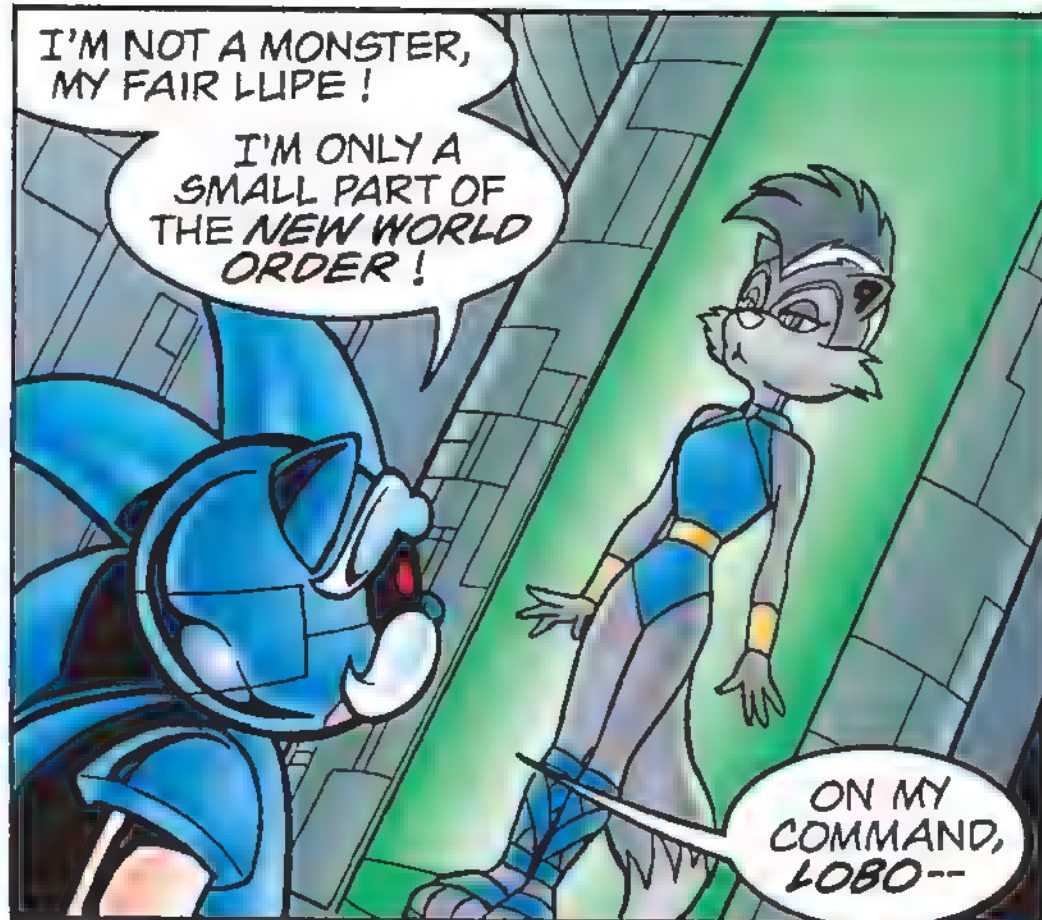
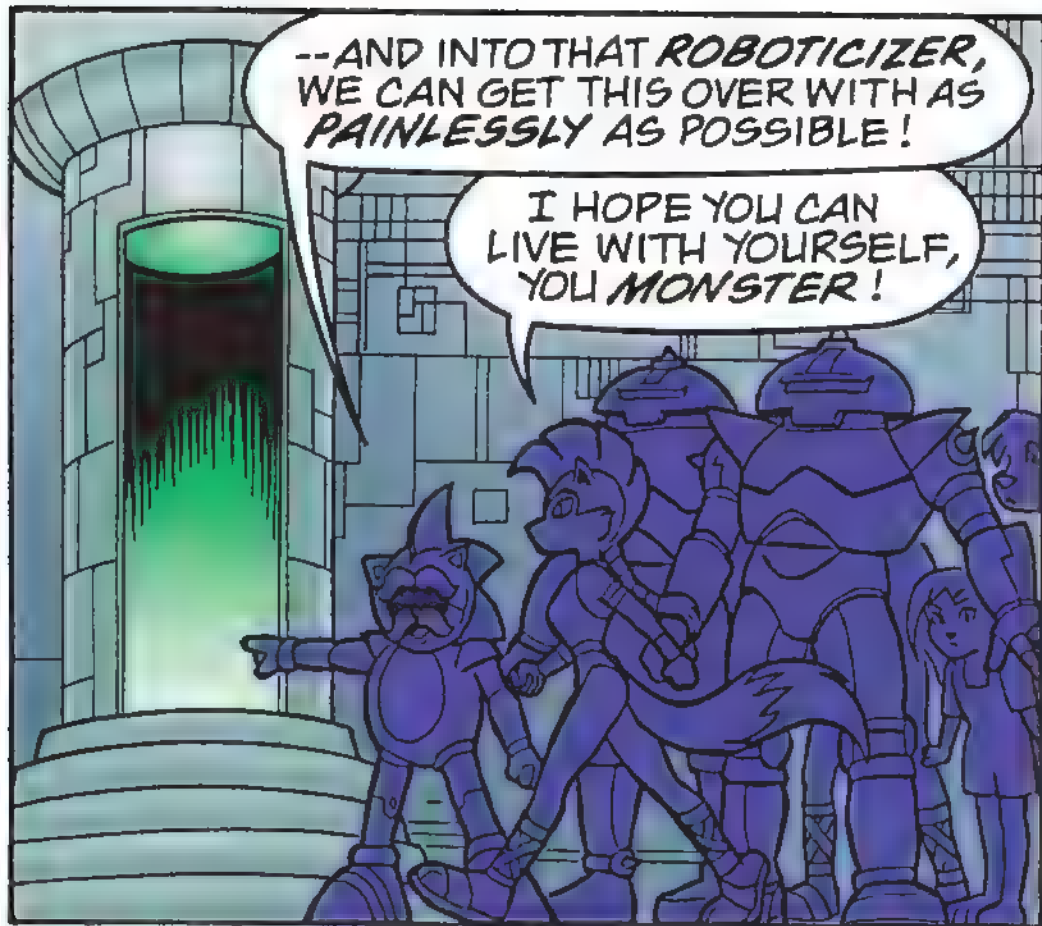
IT'S LOBO!!
AND
MARCOS
AND MARIA
--MY
CHILDREN!!!

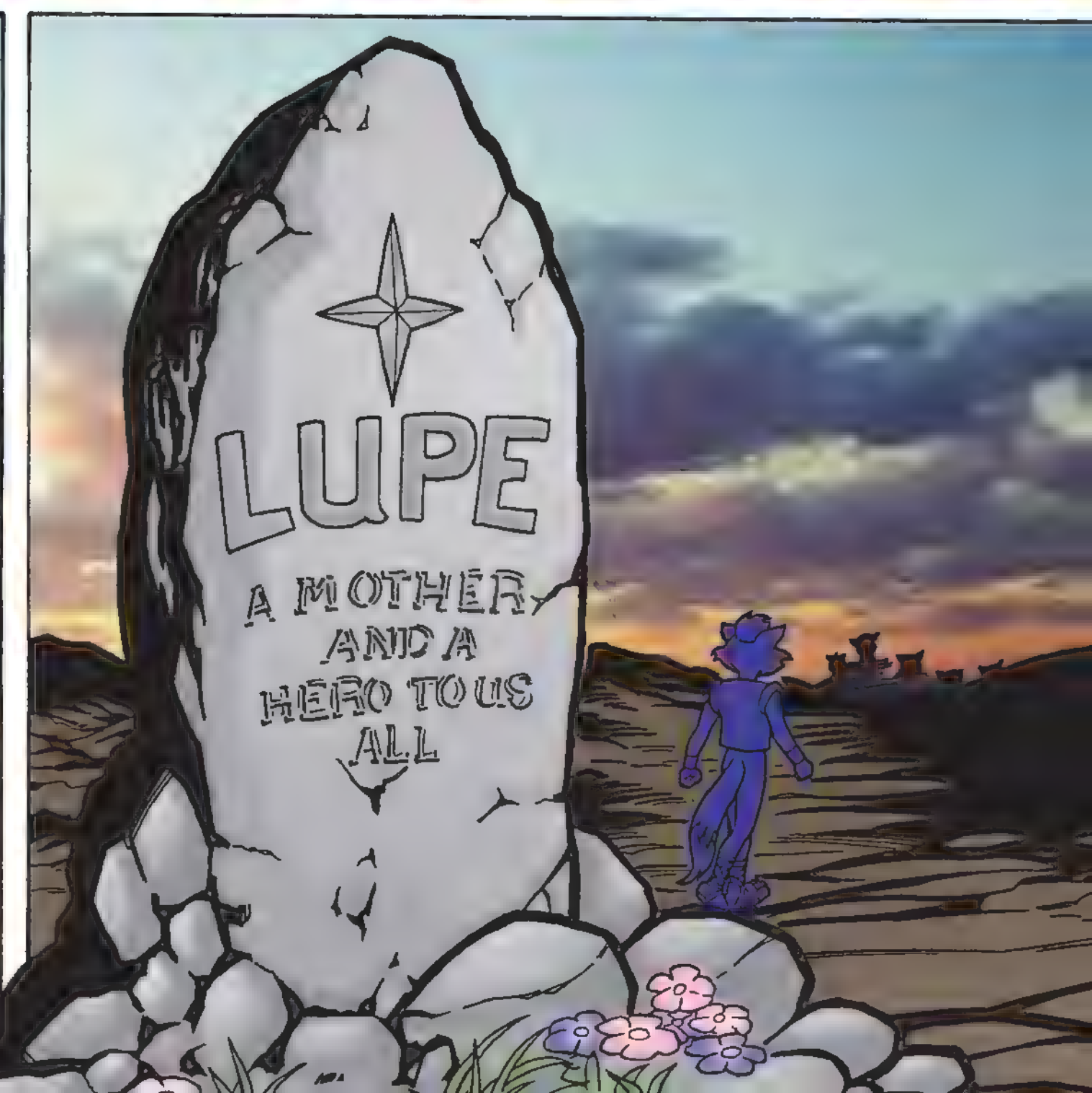
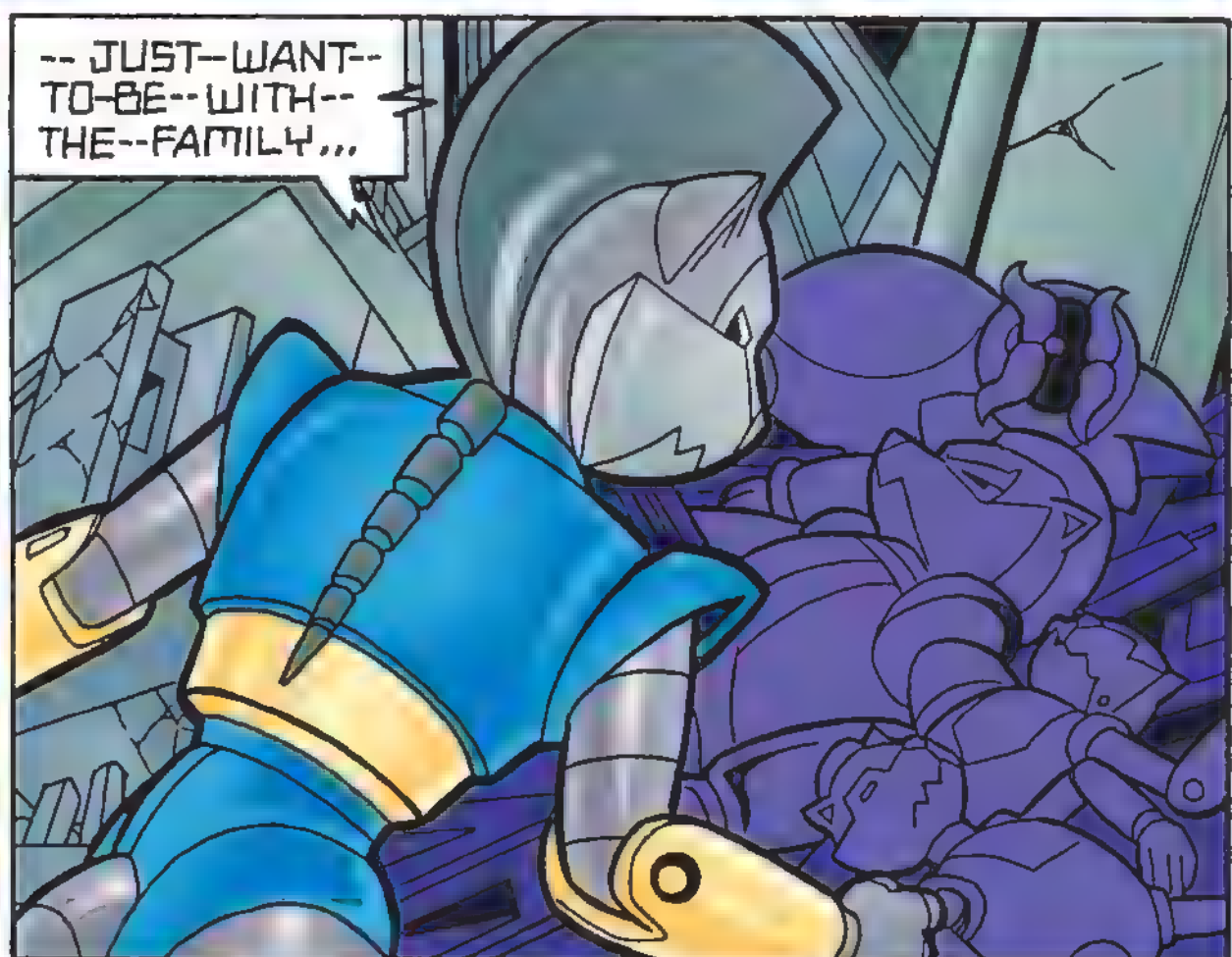
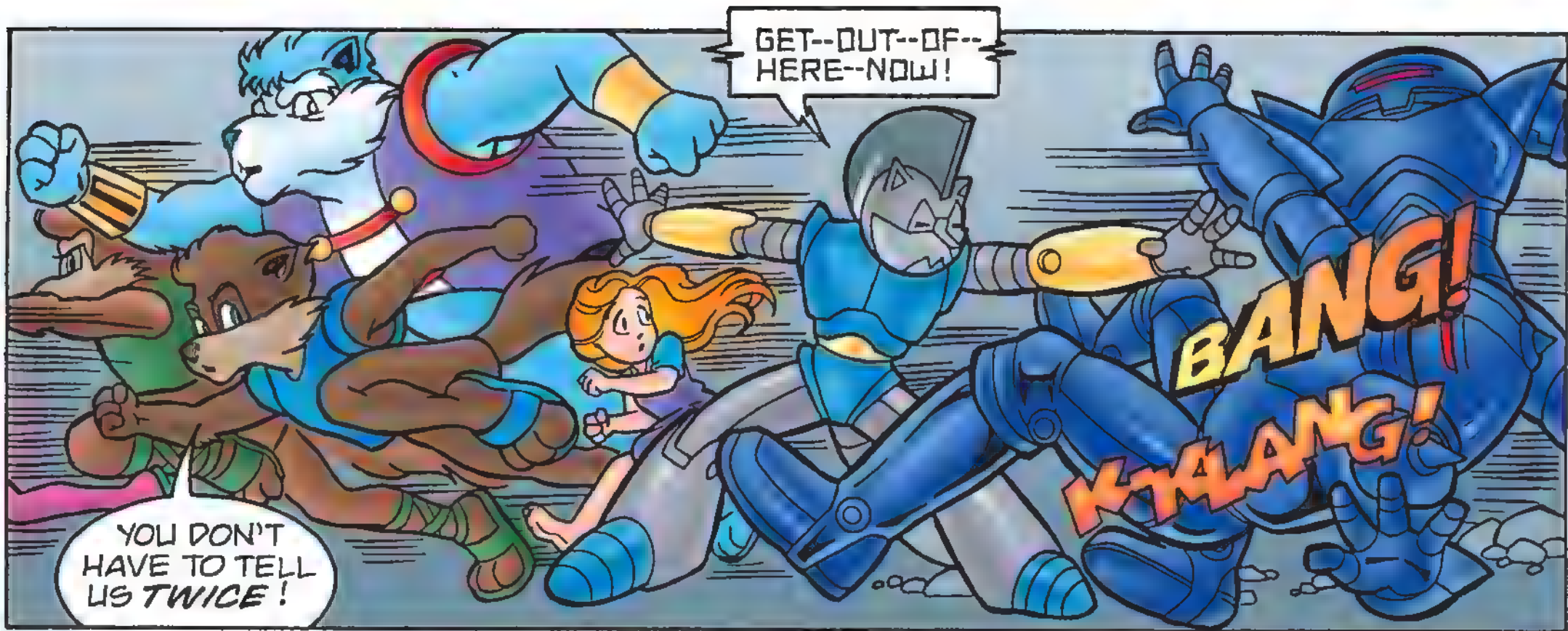
WHAT
HAPPENED?
WHO DID
THIS TO
YOU?!!

I THOUGHT IT
OBVIOUS
AS TO WHAT
HAPPENED!

AS FOR
WHO--







BUNNIE RAB-BOT

-IN-

UPGRADE

TM

HER
LIFE SIGNS
ARE FINALLY
STABILIZING,
DOCTOR!

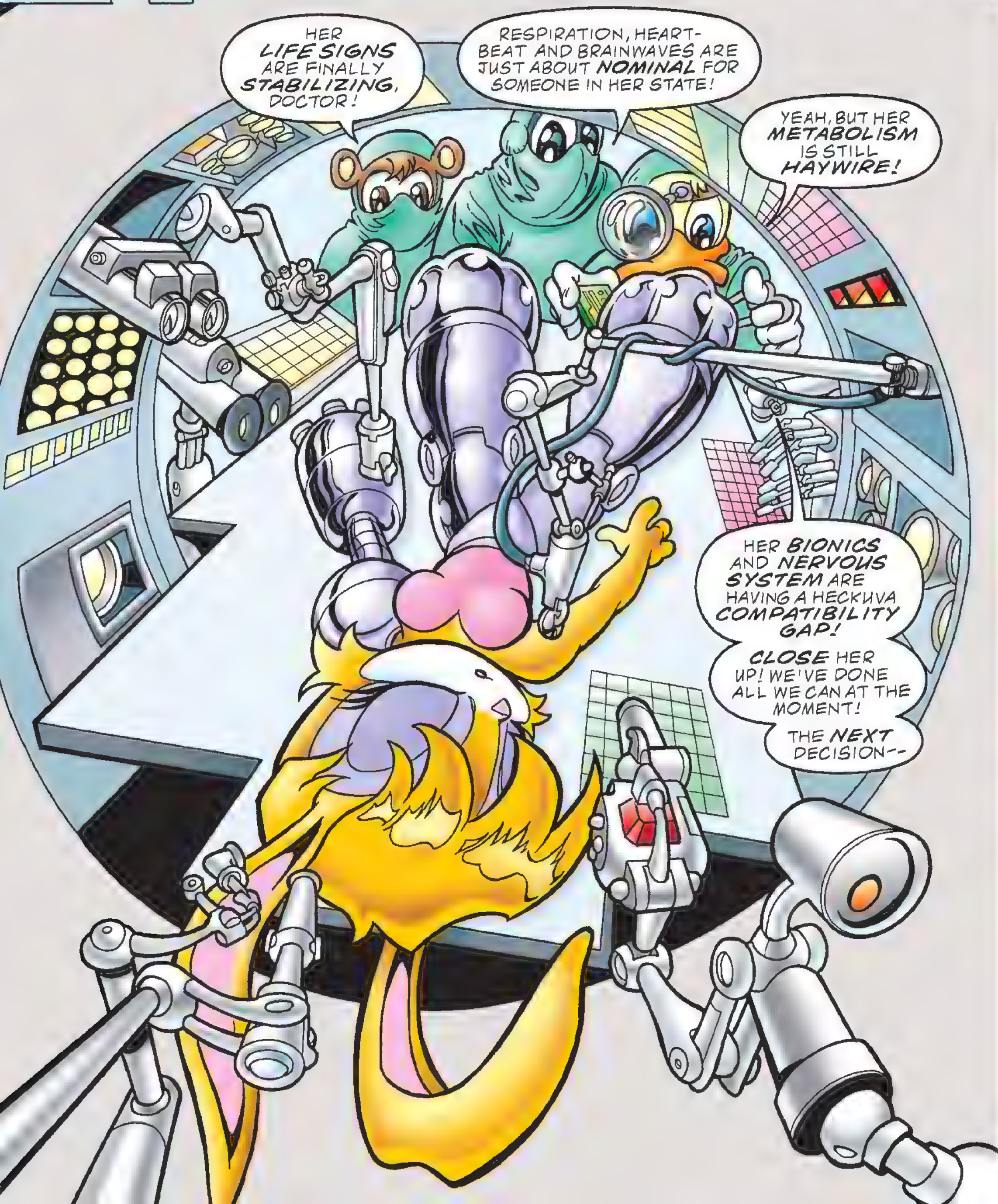
RESPIRATION, HEART-
BEAT AND BRAINWAVES ARE
JUST ABOUT **NOMINAL** FOR
SOMEONE IN HER STATE!

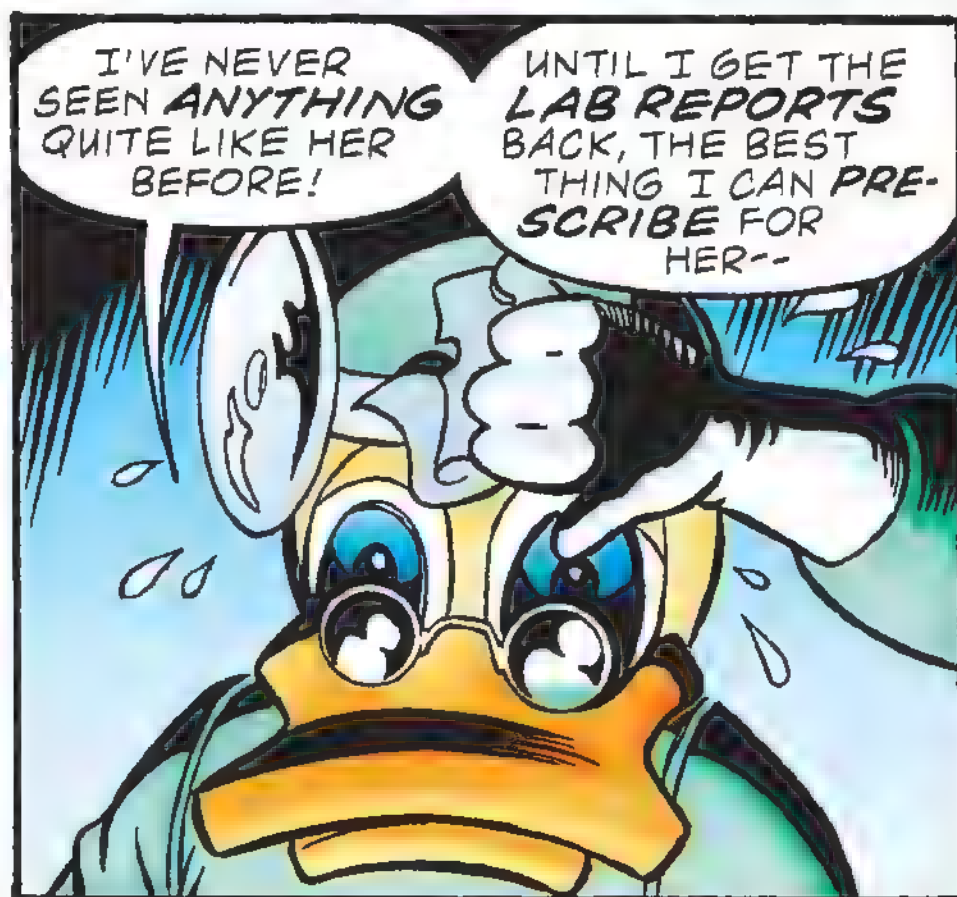
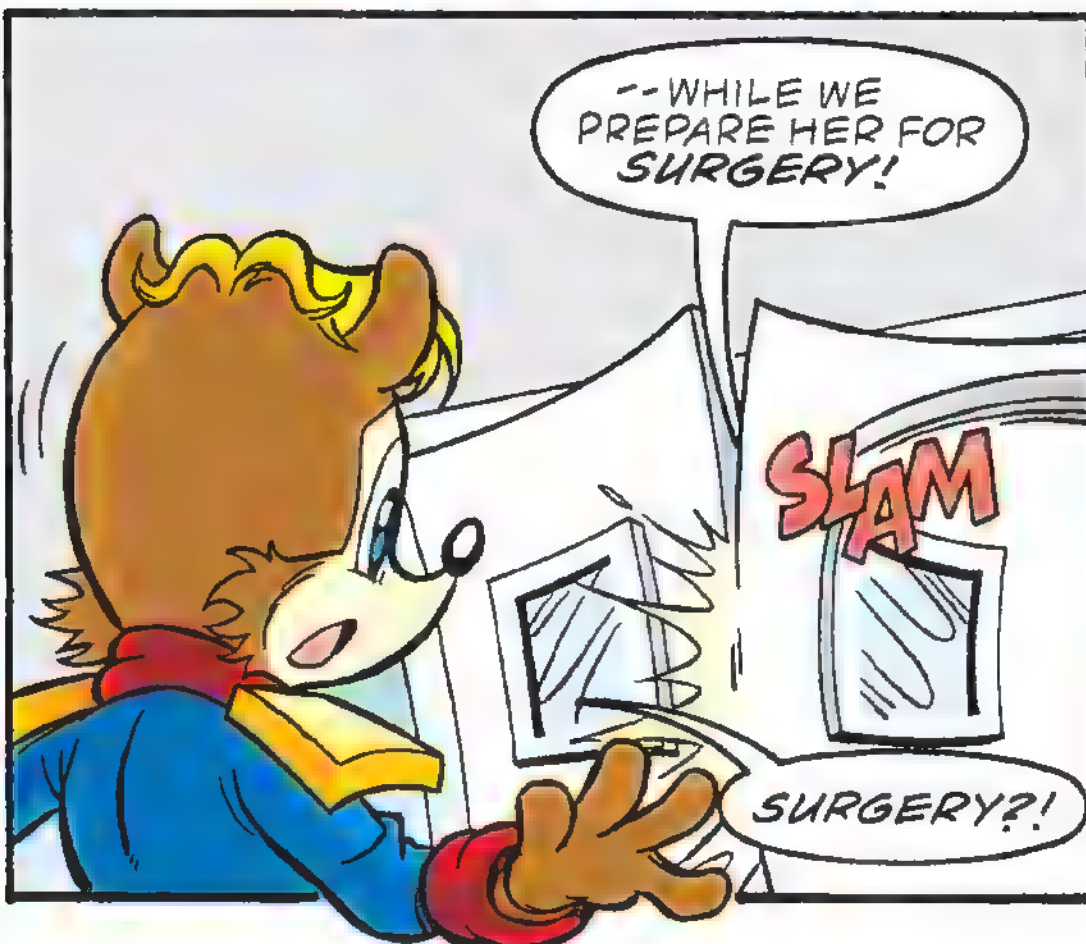
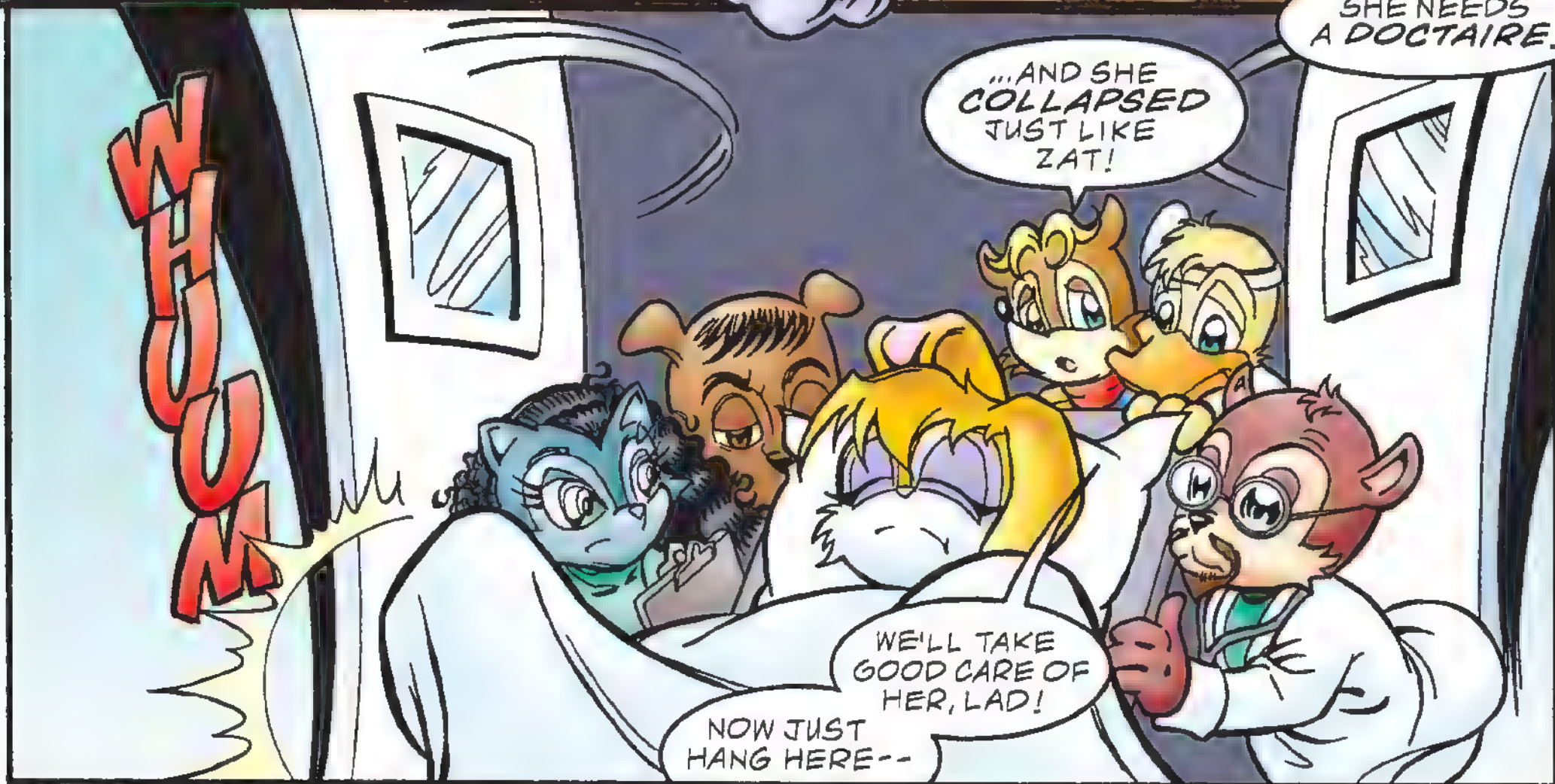
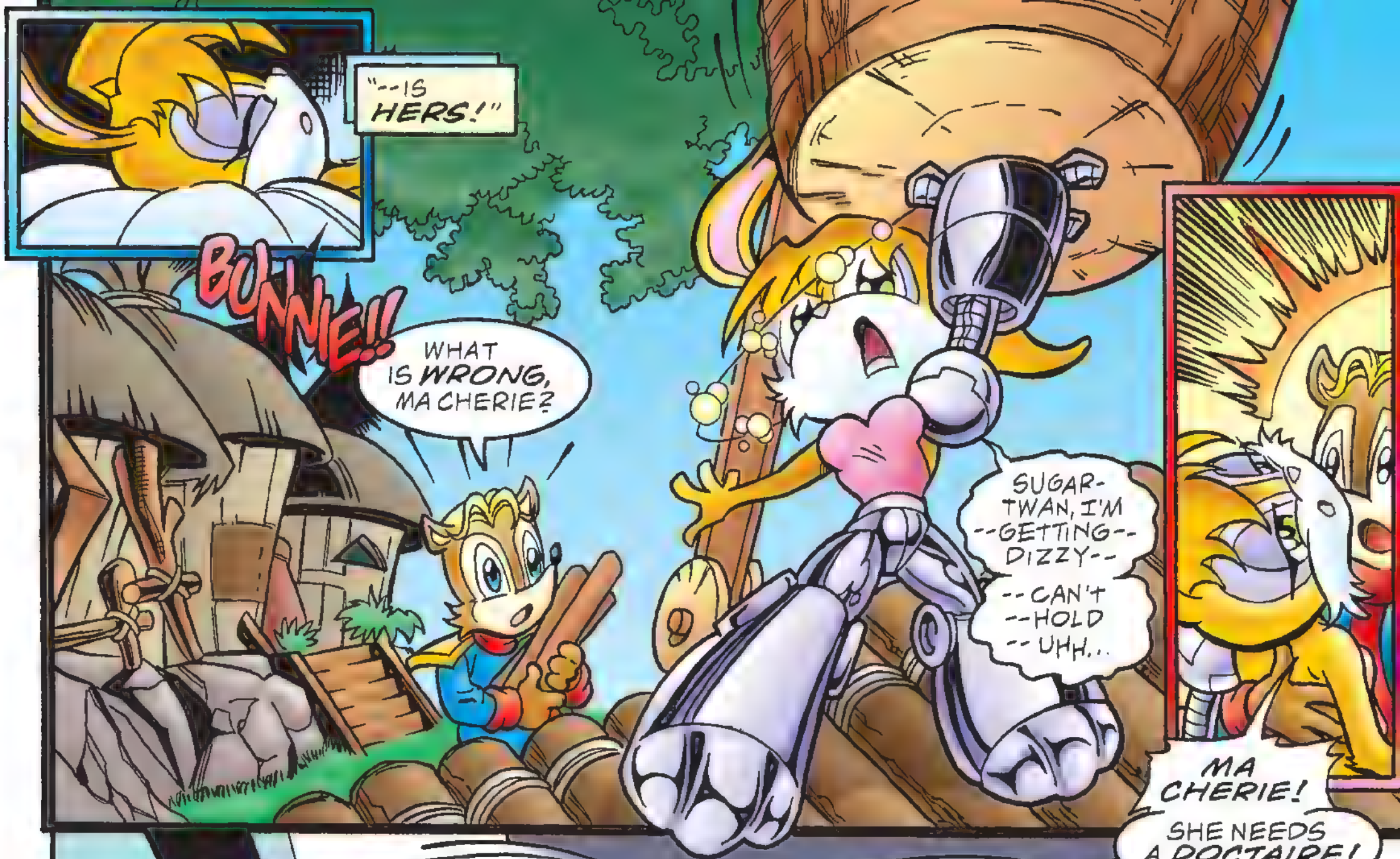
YEAH, BUT HER
METABOLISM
IS STILL
HAYWIRE!

HER **BIONICS**
AND **NERVOUS**
SYSTEM ARE
HAVING A HECKUVA
COMPATIBILITY
GAP!

CLOSE HER
UP! WE'VE DONE
ALL WE CAN AT THE
MOMENT!

THE **NEXT**
DECISION--





"--IS
REST!"

WE CAME AS
SOON AS WE GOT
WORD, KIDDO!

YOU GAVE
US QUITE THE
SCARE!

IS THERE
ANYTHING I CAN
DO FOR YOU,
BUNNIE?

I FEEL LIKE
A DOZEN SWAT-BOTS
ALL PILED ON TOP OF
ME, PRINCESS!

BUT I'LL
BE RIGHT
FINE IN NO
TIME!

WHAT IS THIS?
MOBIUS GRAND
CENTRAL
STATION?

EVERYONE
CLEAR OUT--
EXCEPT MY
PATIENT,
NATURALLY!

DON'T LET
'IM SCARE YA,
GUYS!

HIS **BARK**
IS ACTUALLY WORSE
THAN HIS **BEAK!**

MAYBE
SO--BUT HE
OUTRANKS
US HERE!

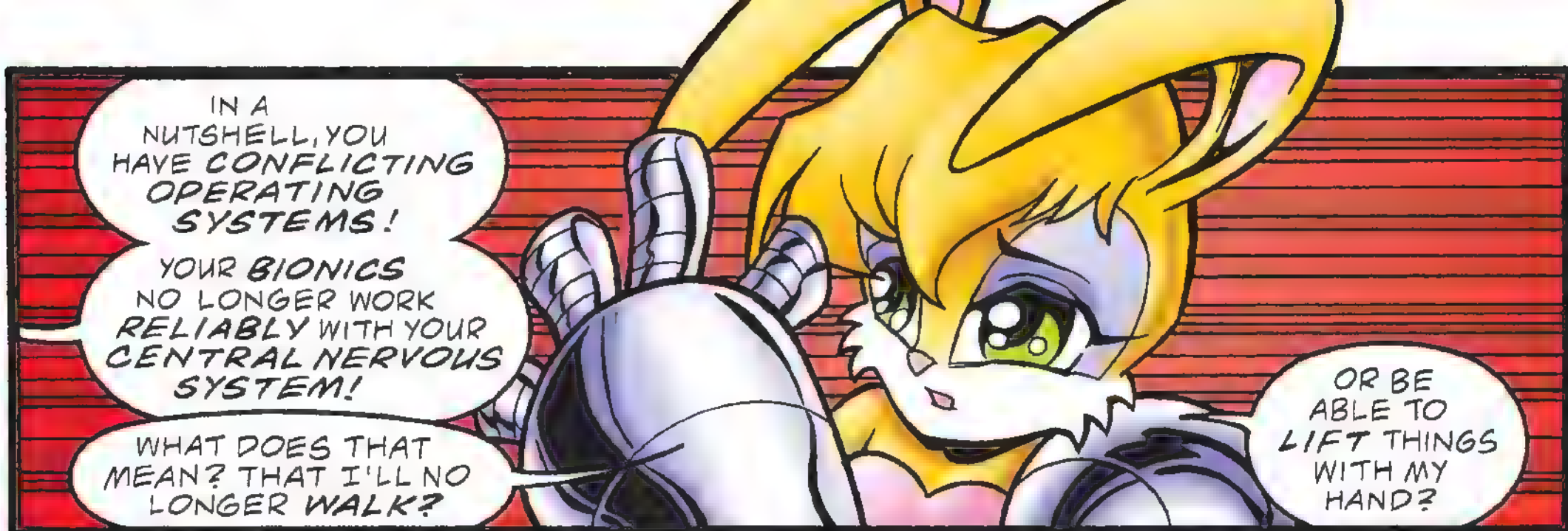
I'LL BE
OUTSIDE JUST
IN CASE, MA
CHERIE!

OKAY, DOC!
I'M A BIG GIRL!
GIVE IT TO ME
STRAIGHT!

WHAT
HAPPENED
TO ME?

WHAT
HAPPENED
YOUNG
LADY?

I'M AMAZED
WHAT HAPPENED,
DIDN'T HAPPEN
LONG BEFORE
THIS!



IN A NUTSHELL, YOU HAVE **CONFLICTING OPERATING SYSTEMS!**

YOUR **BIONICS** NO LONGER WORK **RELIABLY** WITH YOUR **CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM!**

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? THAT I'LL NO LONGER WALK?

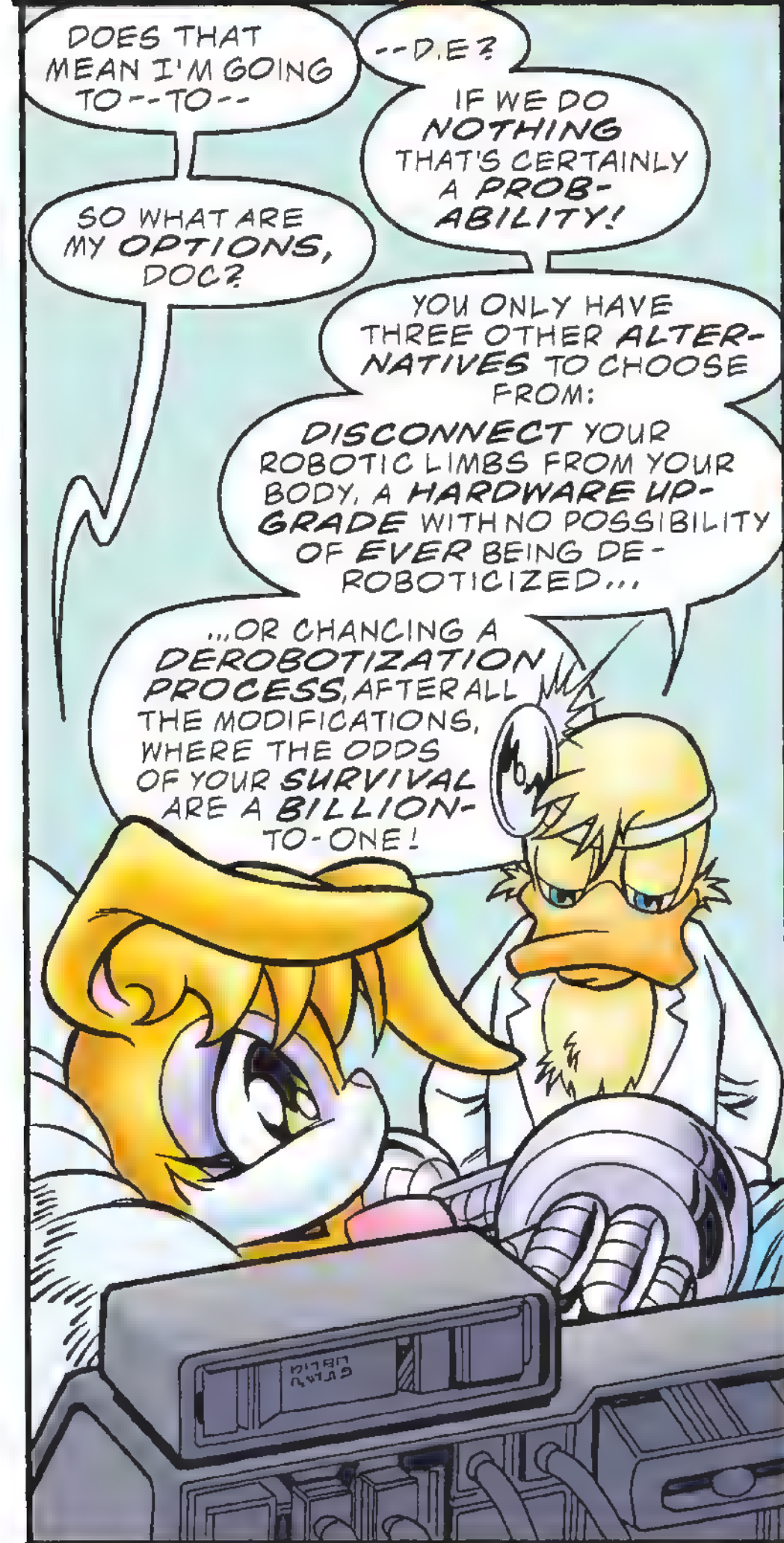
OR BE ABLE TO **LIFT** THINGS WITH MY HAND?



I'M AFRAID IT'S **WORSE** THAN THAT, BUNNIE!

AS YOUR **BIONICS** CONTINUE TO **DETE-RIORATE**, EVENTU-ALLY THEY'LL SHUT DOWN AND BECOME **TOXIC** TO THE **OR-GANIC** PART OF YOUR BODY!

FROM WHAT WE CAN TELL FROM THE TESTS, IT'S AS IF YOUR **BODY** WAS AT **WAR** WITH ITSELF, DETERMINED TO BE EITHER **ALL-ORGANIC** OR **ALL-ROBOTIC!**



DOES THAT MEAN I'M GOING TO--TO--

--D.E.?

IF WE DO **NOTHING** THAT'S CERTAINLY A **PROB-ABILITY!**

SO WHAT ARE MY **OPTIONS**, DOC?

YOU ONLY HAVE THREE OTHER **ALTER-NATIVES** TO CHOOSE FROM:

DISCONNECT YOUR ROBOTIC LIMBS FROM YOUR BODY, A **HARDWARE UP-GRADE** WITH NO POSSIBILITY OF **EVER** BEING **DE-ROBOTICIZED...**

...OR CHANCING A **DEROBOTIZATION PROCESS**, AFTER ALL THE MODIFICATIONS, WHERE THE ODDS OF YOUR **SURVIVAL** ARE A **BILLION-TO-ONE!**



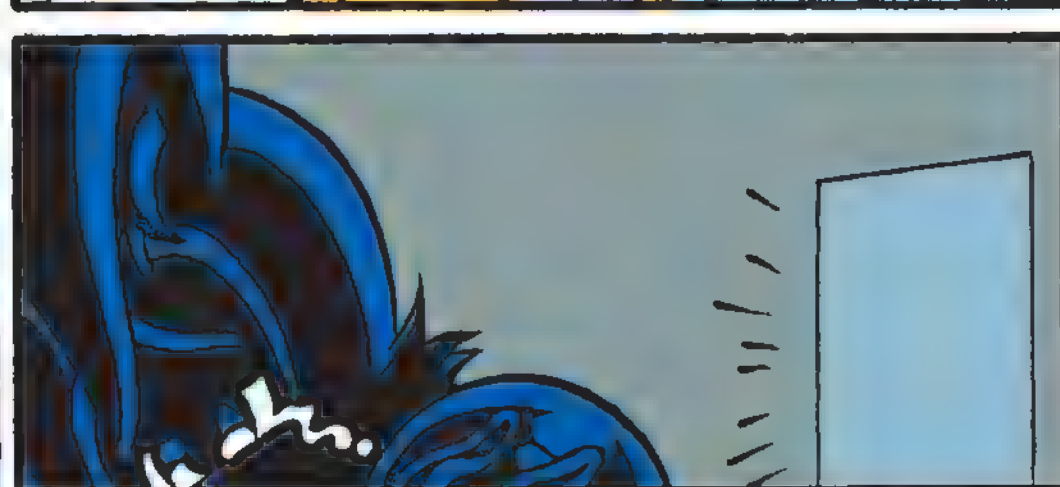
WHAT WOULD YOU DO, DOC, IF YOU WERE ME?

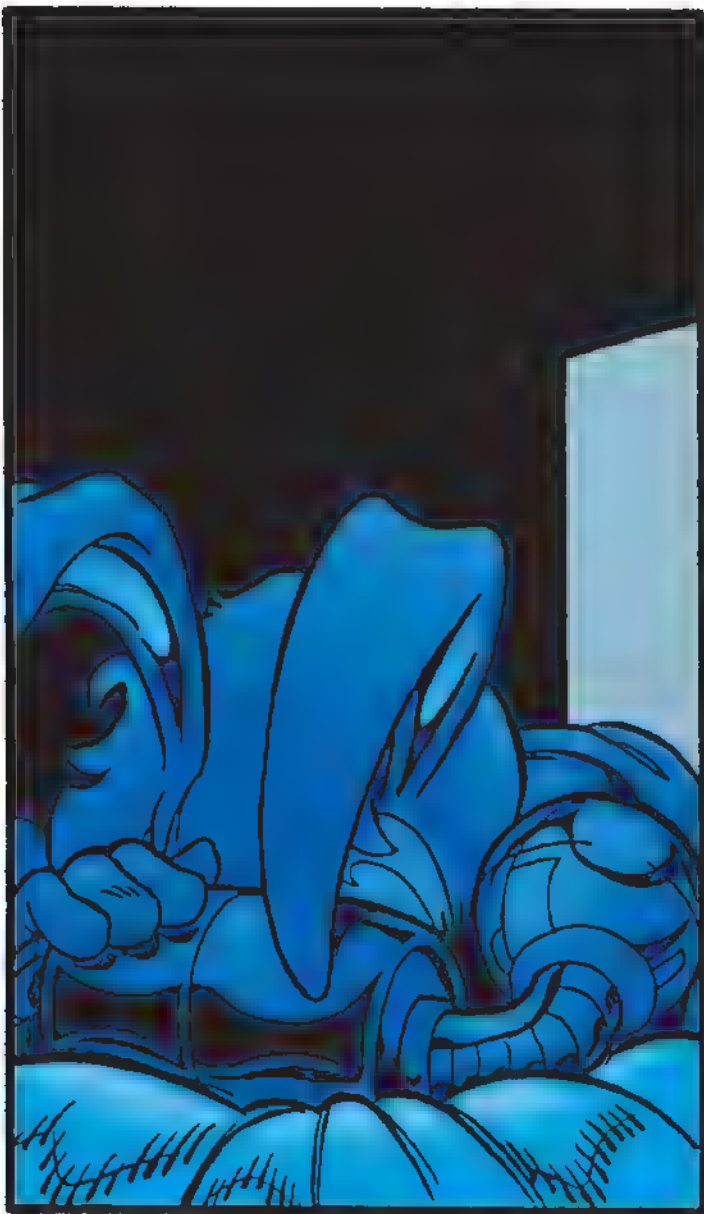
THAT DEPENDS ON **WHICH** ANSWER I COULD LIVE WITH THE **REST** OF MY LIFE!



THAT'S A **GOOD ONE**, DOC!

I'LL HAVE TO GET BACK TO YOU ON THAT!





SOB

BUNNIE?



SUGAH-TWAN!

I CAME TO ZEE IF THERE WAS ANY- ZING I COULD DO FOR YOU, MY LOVE!

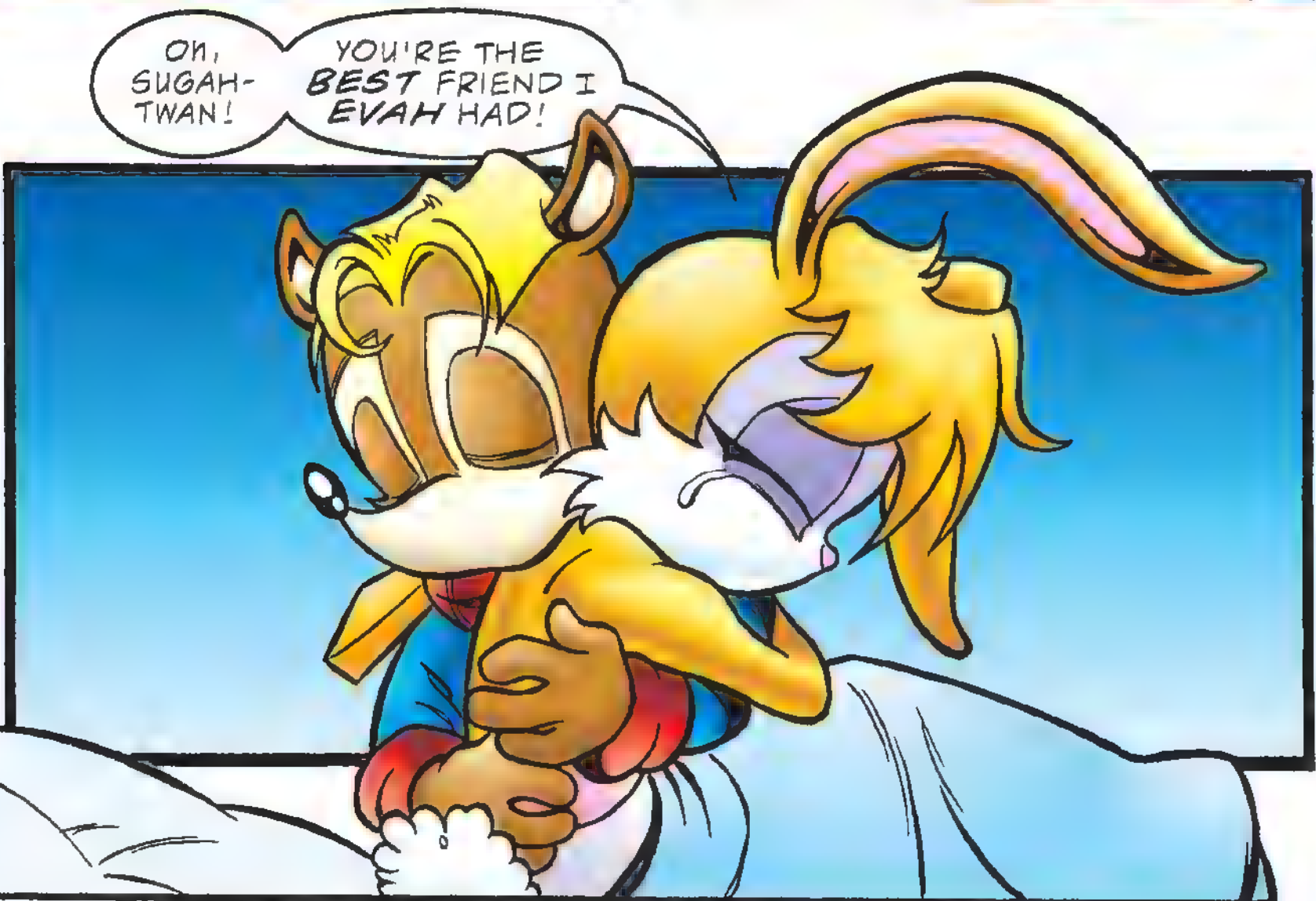


DO YOU THINK YOU COULD STILL **LOVE** ME IF I REMAINED LIKE I AM FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE?



MY DEAREST SWEET BUNNIE-- -- I WOULD LOVE YOU NO MATTER WHAT--

--AS LONG AS WE FACED EACH DAY TOGETHAIRE!



OH, SUGAH-TWAN!

YOU'RE THE **BEST** FRIEND I **EVAAH** HAD!

THERE!

THAT
SHOULD DO
THE TRICK!

NOW HOW
ABOUT TRYING
IT ON?

WELL, IT
SHOAH DOES
FEEL FINE AND
LOOKS EVEN
BETTAH!

ARE YOU
CERTAIN I WON'T
HAVE THE SAME
PROBLEM AGAIN
WITH THIS HEAH
SET-UP?

ABSOLUTELY!

IF YOU GIVE
ME A FEW MINUTES,
I CAN GO OVER ALL
THE **TECHNICAL**
DETAILS WITH
YOU!

AS LONG
AS IT **WORKS**,
I CAN **LIVE**
WITH THAT!

WATCH OUT,
WORLD--

--HERE I
COME, **BETTAH**
THAN EVAH!

YOU GO,
GIRL!

THE
END

PERSONAL LOG:
SKYDATE 458.9.28.
I CAN'T BEAR IT ANYMORE.
I HAVE TO KNOW.

I CAN'T GO FORWARD WITH
MY LIFE UNTIL I KNOW MY
PAST.

AFTER GIVING THE MATTER
MUCH THOUGHT--

MY VISOR
READOUT SHOWS
THE COMPLEX--
DEAD AHEAD!

JULIE-SU IN SHADOWS

--I'VE DECIDED TO RETURN
TO THE LAST PLACE I EVER
EXPECTED TO VISIT...

WHERE ELSE COULD I
BEGIN MY QUEST--

sd. 2.207 nls.
dsl. 47.065 mls.

scan. pr. 57980001
ext. mp av: scanning.
ll. signs.... neg.

--THAN THE PLACE I
HAD ONCE CALLED
HOME.

I'LL BET
NO ONE'S BEEN
HERE SINCE
KNUCKLES
FOUGHT
KRAGOK!*

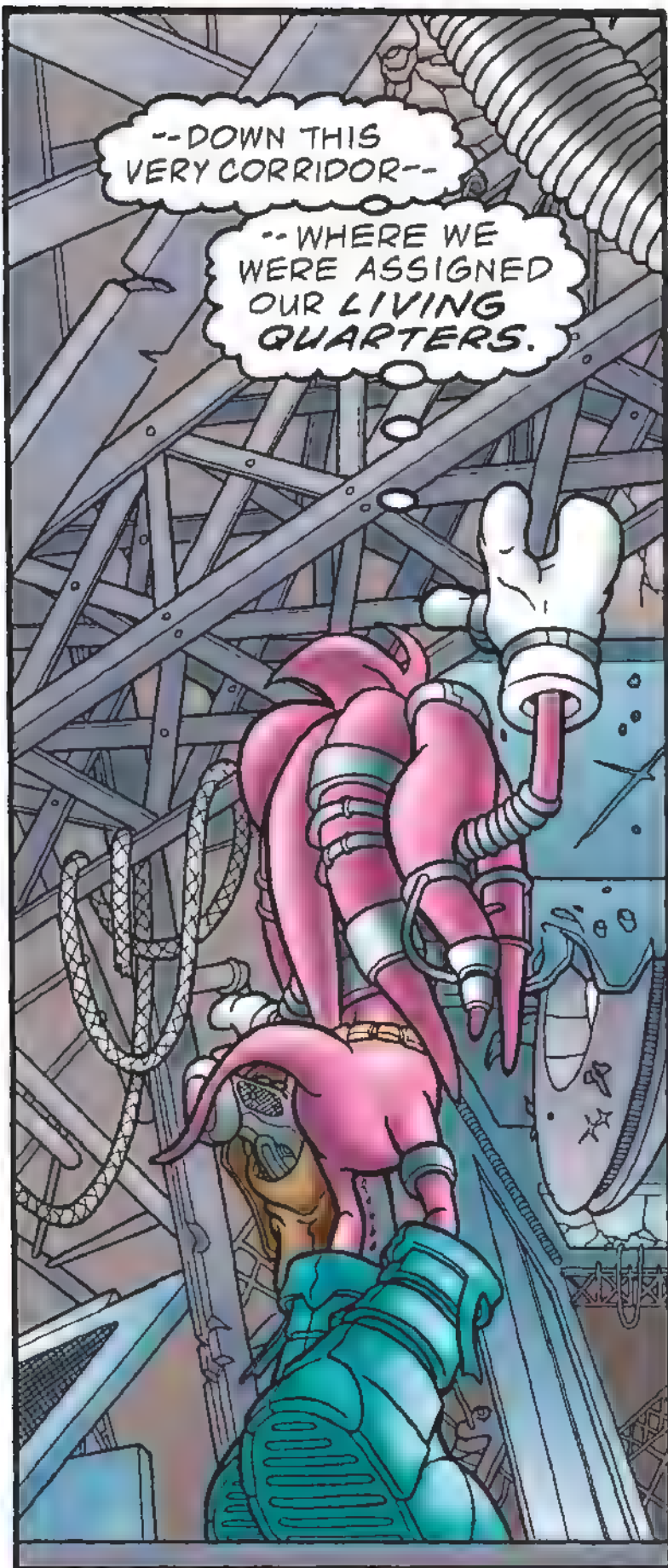
KNUCKLES ARCHIVES VOL. 1
--EDITOR

NOT A SOUND
--OR SIGN OF LIFE--
ANYWHERE!

ALL THE
EFFORT IT TOOK
TO **BUILD** THIS
PLACE--LEFT TO
ROT!

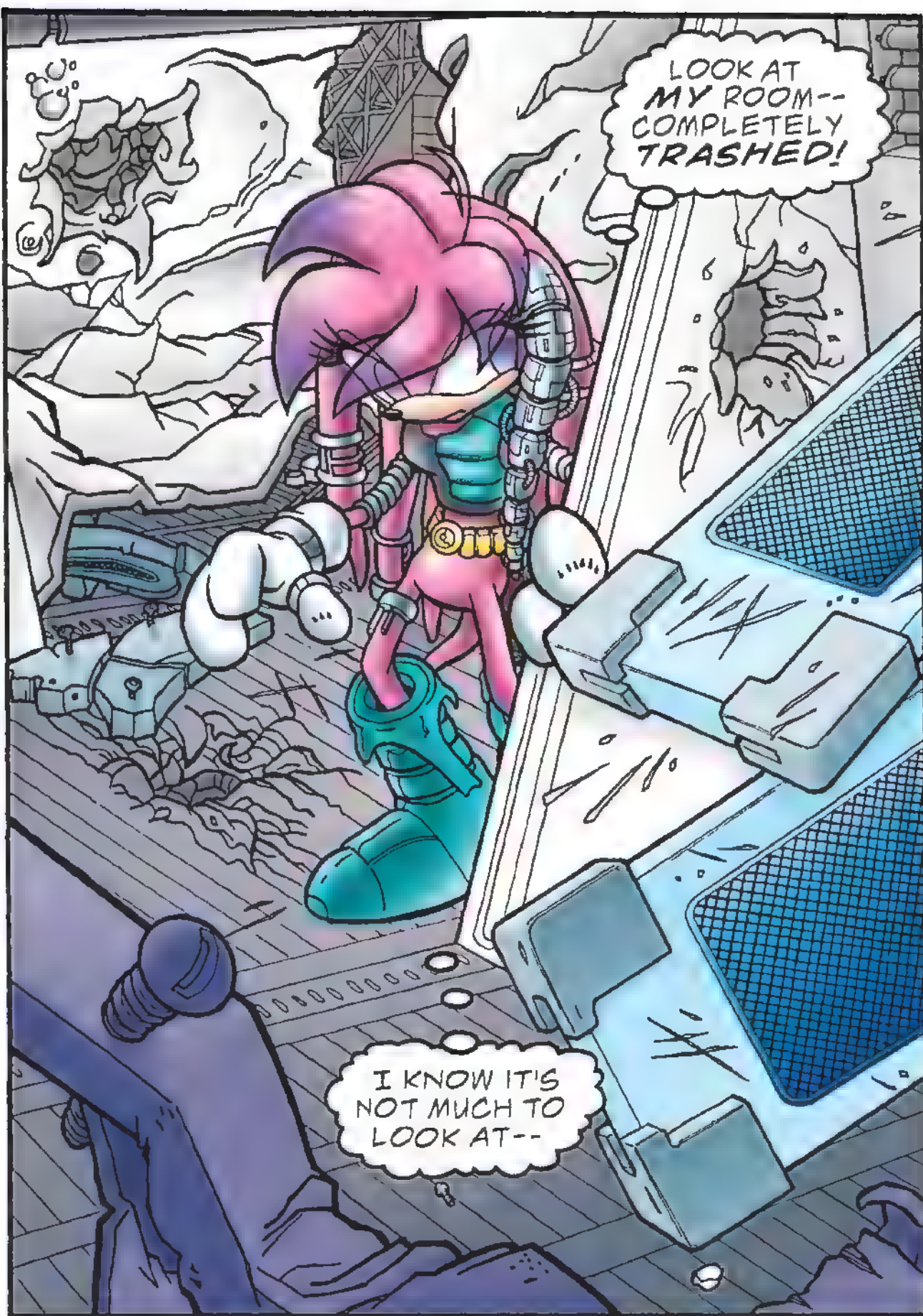
STILL...

...THE POSSIBILITY
REMAINS I MAY YET FIND
WHAT I CAME FOR--



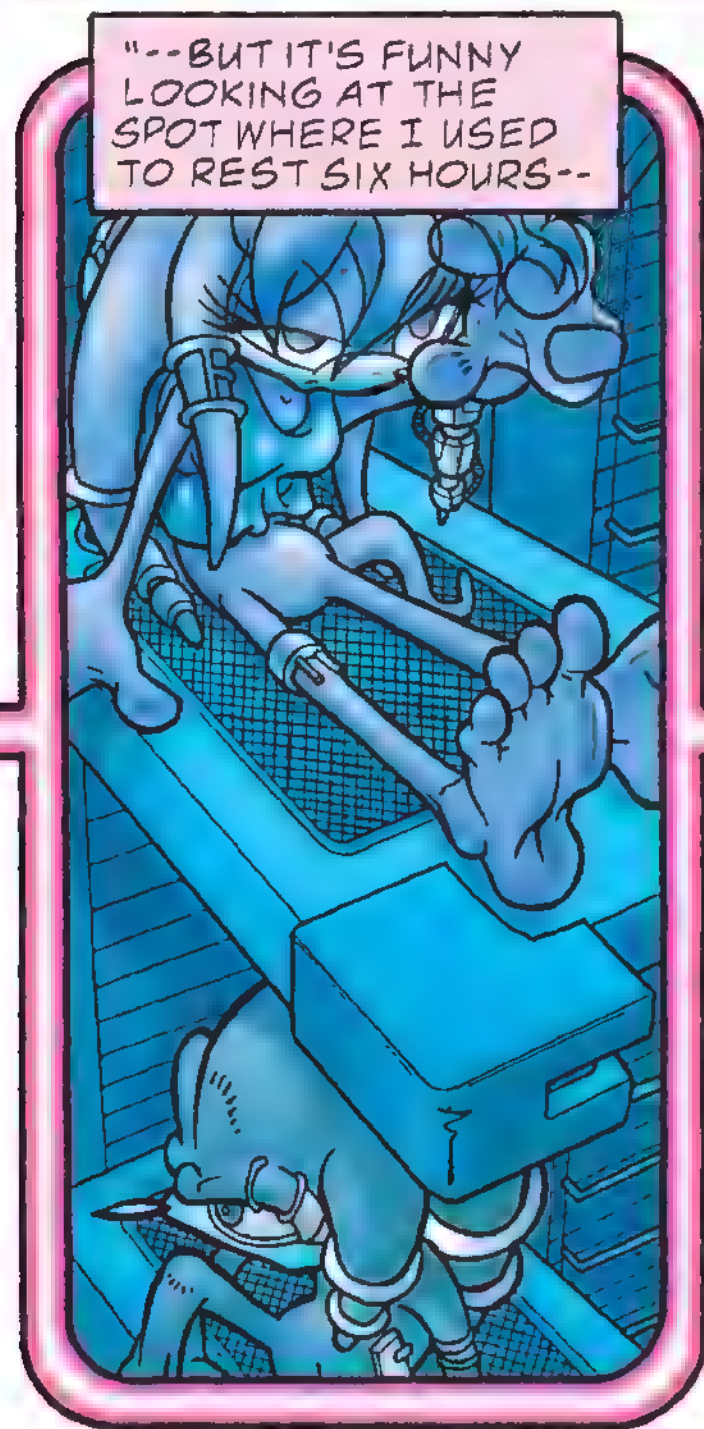
--DOWN THIS
VERY CORRIDOR--

-- WHERE WE
WERE ASSIGNED
OUR **LIVING
QUARTERS.**

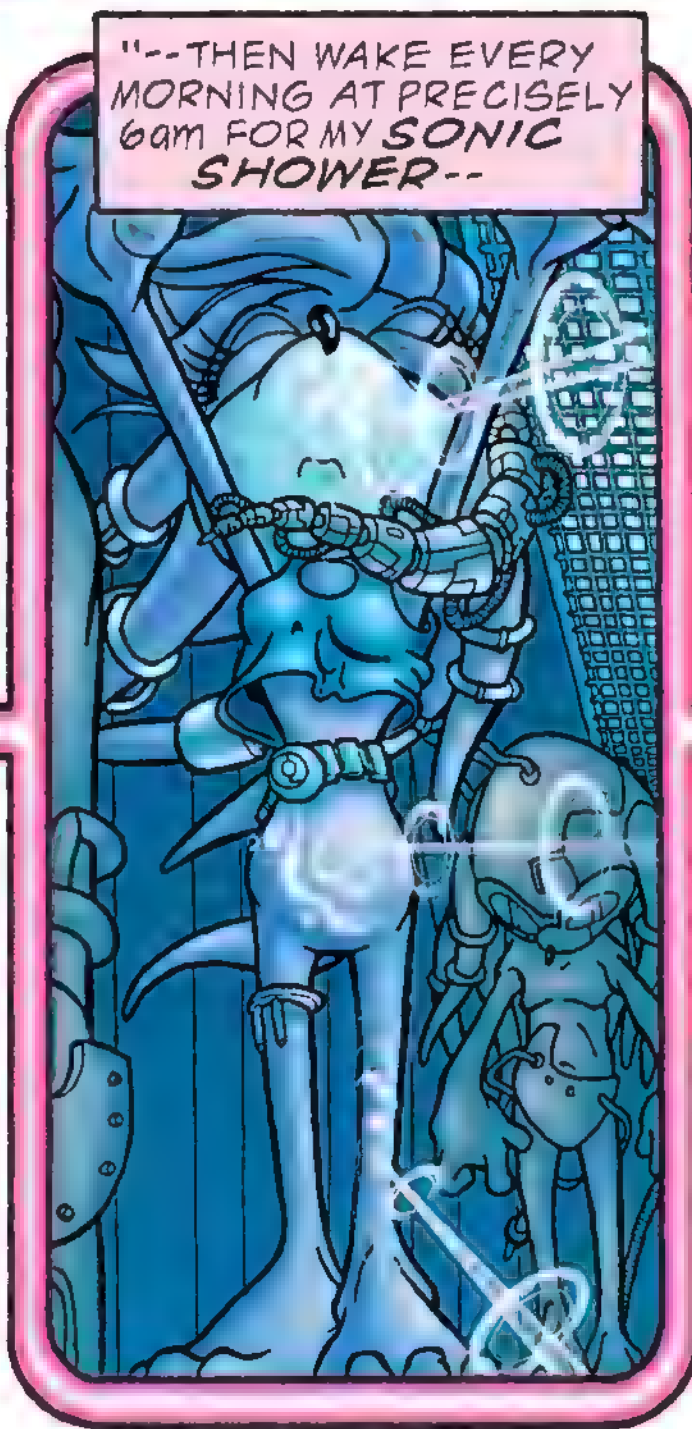


LOOK AT
**MY ROOM--
COMPLETELY
TRASHED!**

I KNOW IT'S
NOT MUCH TO
LOOK AT--



"--BUT IT'S FUNNY
LOOKING AT THE
SPOT WHERE I USED
TO REST SIX HOURS--



"--THEN WAKE EVERY
MORNING AT PRECISELY
6am FOR MY **SONIC
SHOWER--**



"--WHEREUPON I
WOULD DRESS AND
BEGIN MY DAY...

LEGIONNAIRE
JULIE-SU, PLEASE
REPORT TO THE
**MAIN
COMMAND
CENTER!**

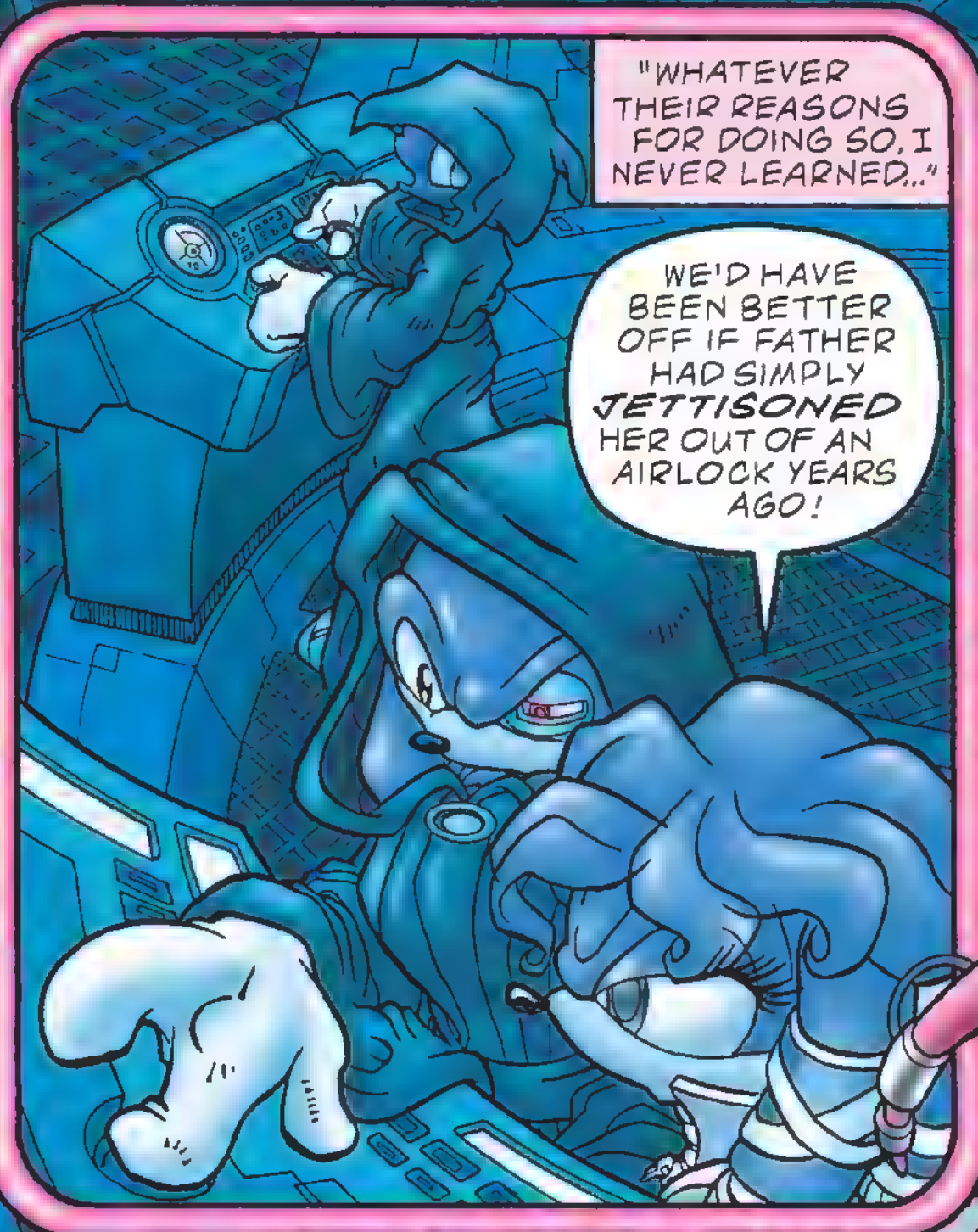


LEGIONNAIRE
JULIE-SU REPORTING
AS ORDERED,
SIR!

TAKE OVER
AT NAVIGATION,
LEGIONNAIRE!

AS YOU
COMMAND!

"FOR SOME REASON, I ALWAYS
FELT LIKE **KRAGOK** AND
HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND, WHO
EVERYONE REFERRED TO AS
KOMMISSAR, WERE CONSTANTLY
WATCHING ME!



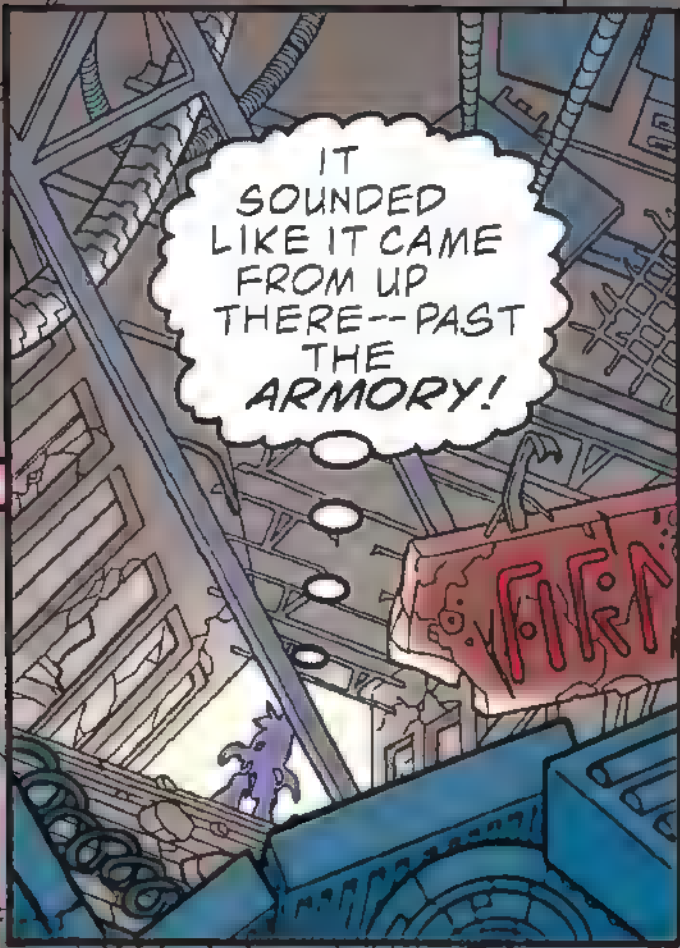
"WHATEVER
THEIR REASONS
FOR DOING SO, I
NEVER LEARNED..."

WE'D HAVE
BEEN BETTER
OFF IF FATHER
HAD SIMPLY
JETTISONED
HER OUT OF AN
AIRLOCK YEARS
AGO!

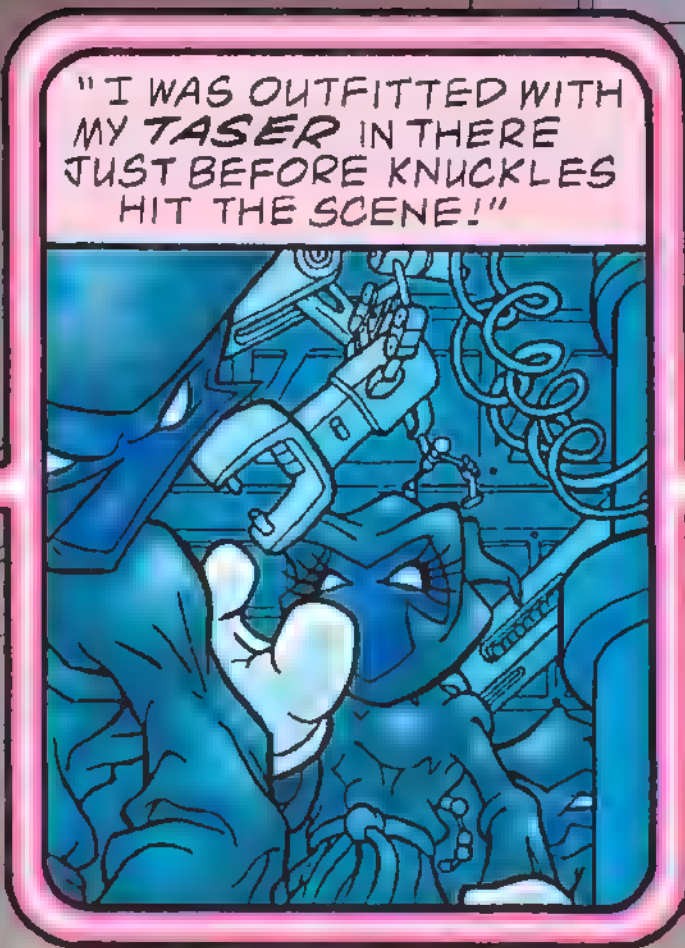
FHHUUUMMM

HOLD IT!
THAT SOUNDED
LIKE A DOOR
SLIDING
OPEN!

COULD SOME-
ONE ELSE BE
LURKING AROUND
AS WELL?



IT
SOUNDED
LIKE IT CAME
FROM UP
THERE--PAST
THE
ARMORY!



"I WAS OUTFITTED WITH
MY **TASER** IN THERE
JUST BEFORE KNUCKLES
HIT THE SCENE!"

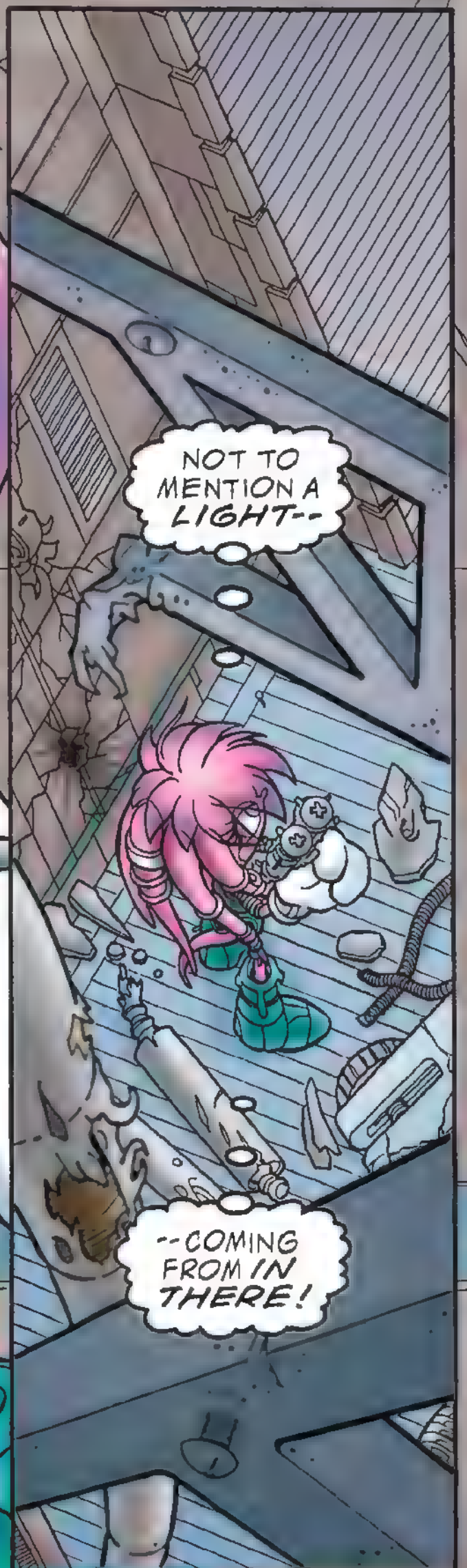


CONSIDERING
I SHOULD BE THE
ONLY ONE HERE,
A **PRECAUTION**
OR TWO SHOULDN'T
HURT!



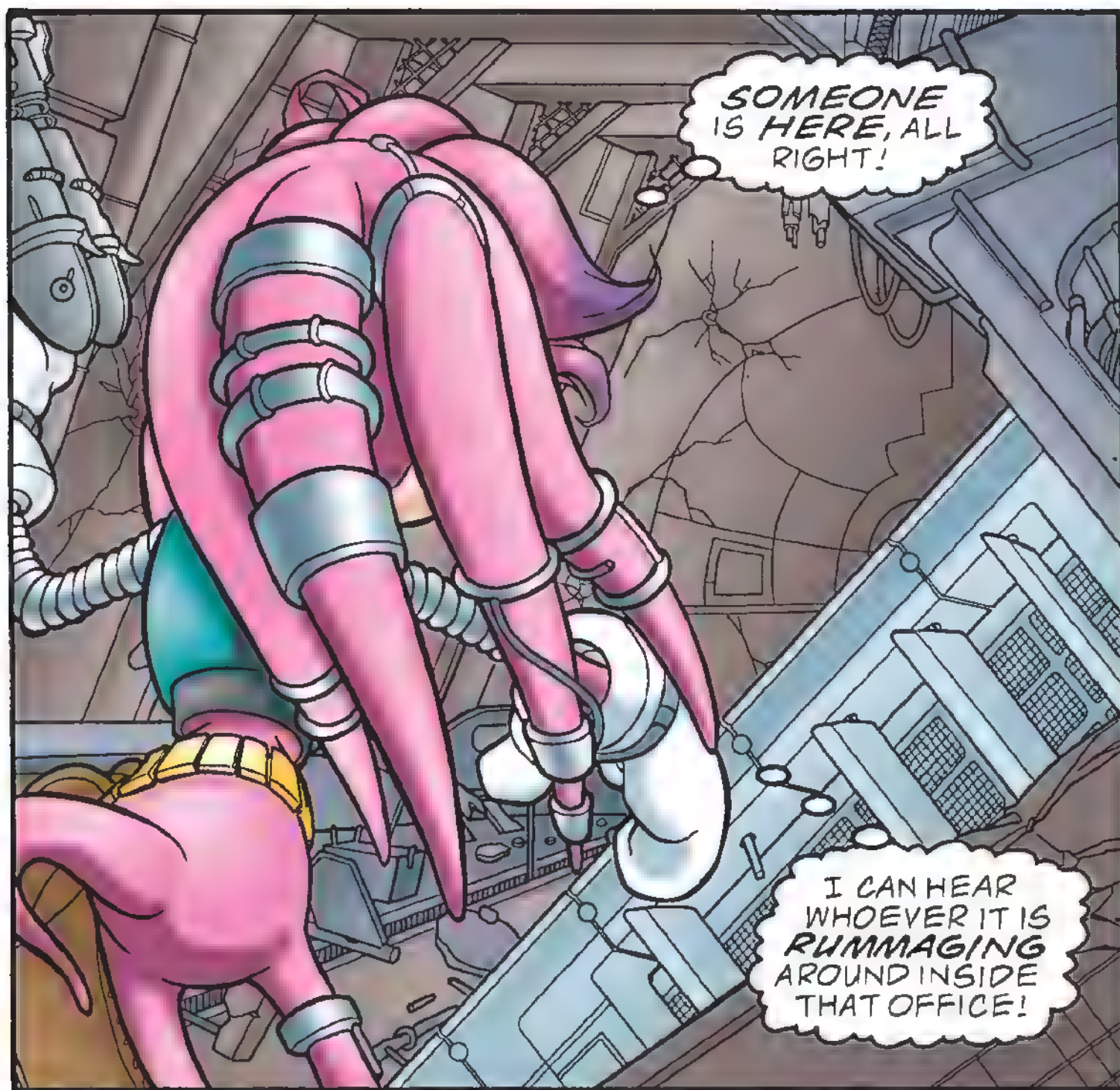
WELL,
I'LL BE--

FOOTSTEPS
COMING FROM
DOWN THIS
CORRIDOR!



NOT TO
MENTION A
LIGHT--

--COMING
FROM **IN**
THERE!



SOMEONE IS HERE, ALL RIGHT!

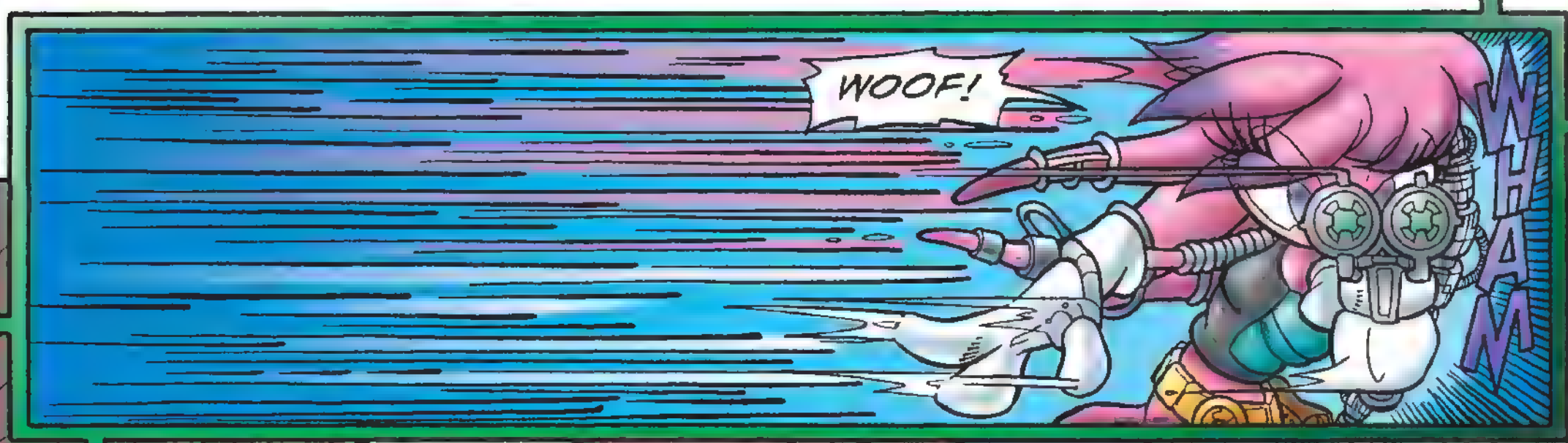
I CAN HEAR WHOEVER IT IS **RUMMAGING** AROUND INSIDE THAT OFFICE!



W
R
R
R
P

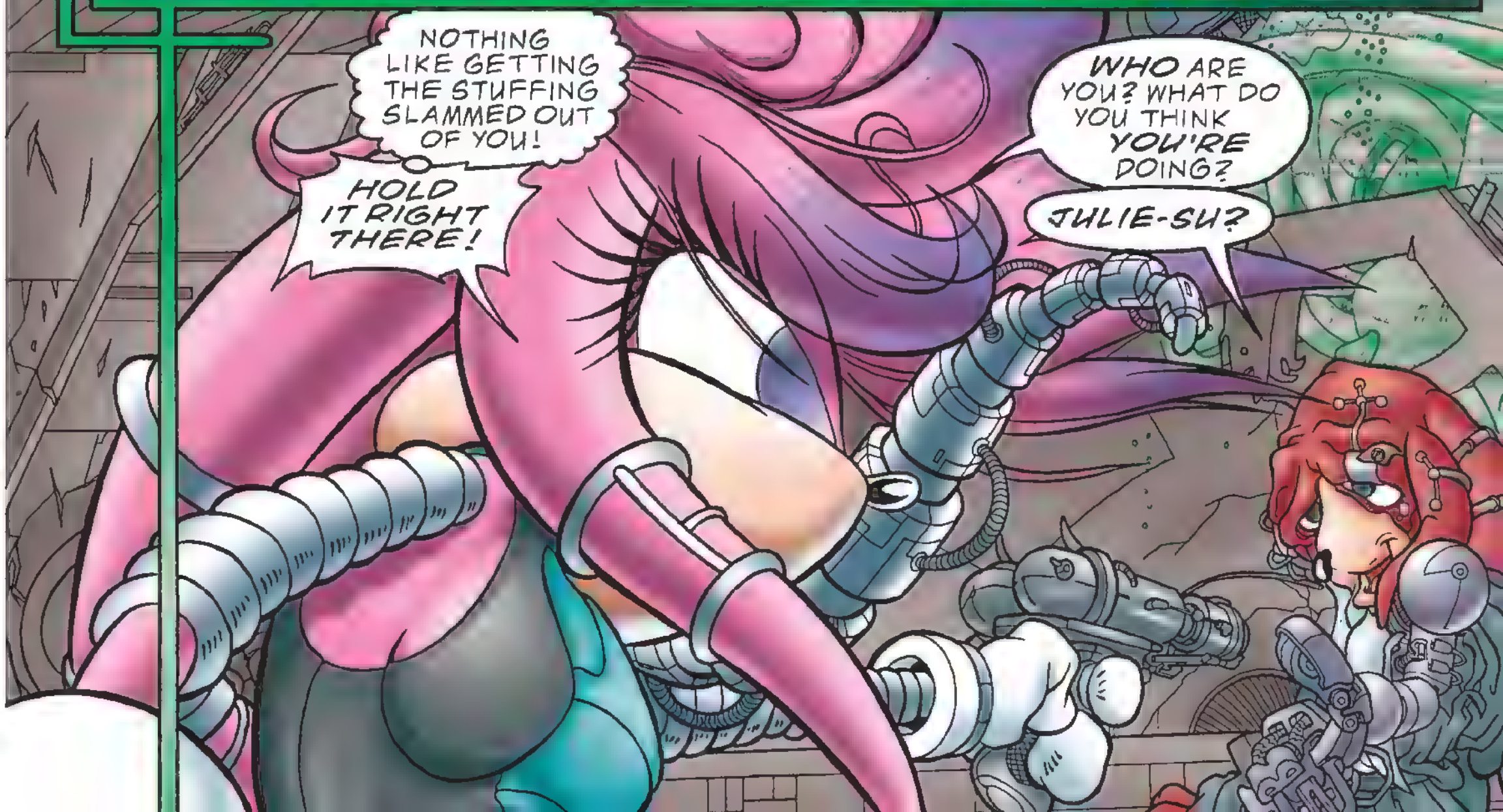
OH NO!

I **ACTIVATED** THE **SECURITY SHIELD!**



WOOF!

W
H
A
M



NOTHING LIKE GETTING THE STUFFING **SLAMMED** OUT OF YOU!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU THINK **YOU'RE** DOING?

JULIE-SU?



YOU DON'T
REMEMBER
ME, DO YOU,
CHILD? MY NAME
IS **SIMON!**

AHH, I'M NOT
SURPRISED, AS I
DIDN'T HAVE AS
MUCH CONTACT
WITH YOU AS MY
DARLING
FLOREN-CA!

KRAGOK
SAW TO THAT!

YOU
KNOW
ME?



EVER SINCE
YOU WERE BUT
AN INFANT!

ONCE WE
LEARNED YOU
HAD RETURNED,
FLOREN-CA AND
I WANTED TO
MAKE
CONTACT!

SHE MISSES
YOU SO VERY
MUCH, MY
DEAR!



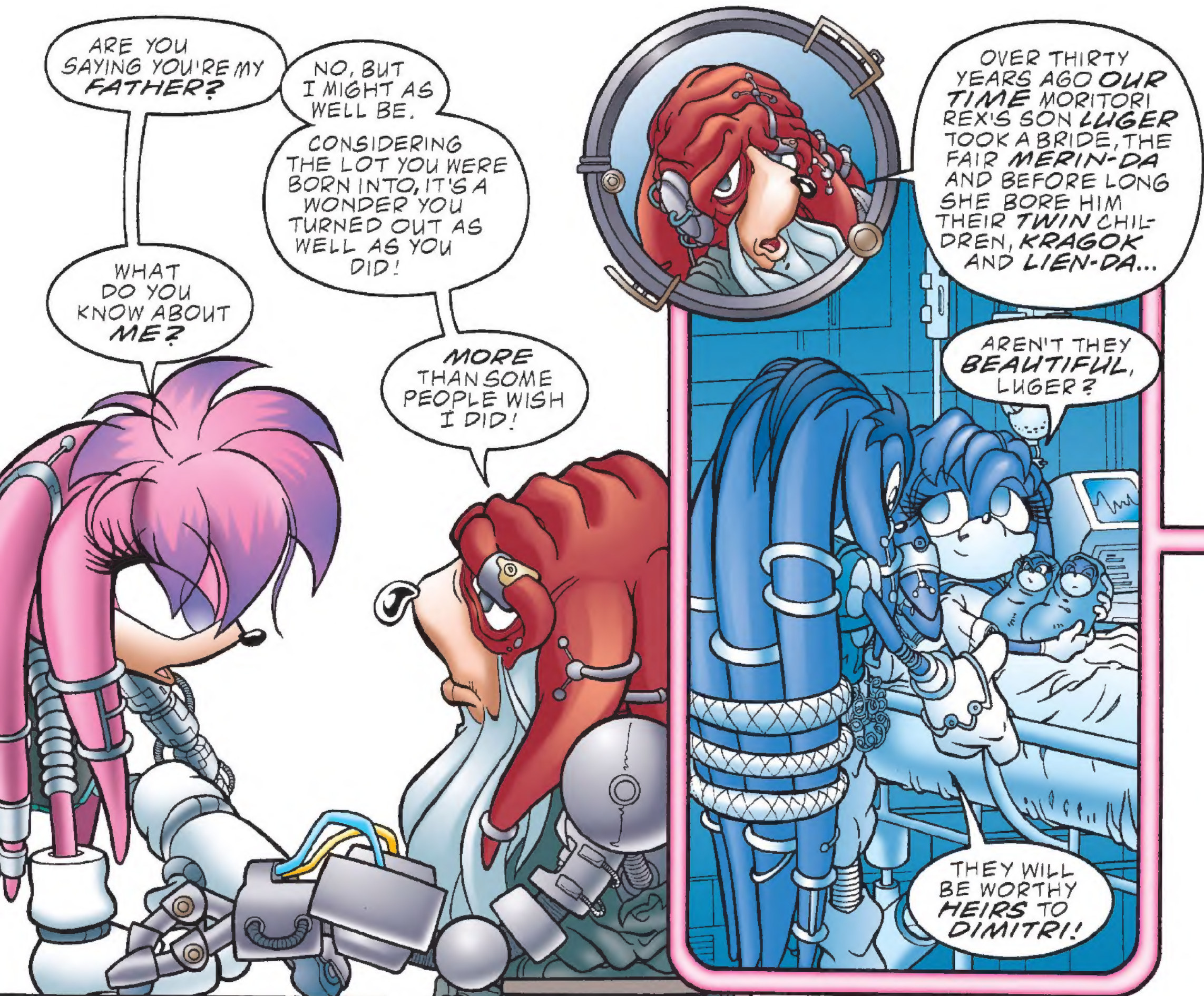
HOW DO I
KNOW YOU'RE
TELLING THE
TRUTH?

A **FAIR**
QUESTION AND WELL
DESERVED!

HEAVEN KNOWS
WE ECHIDNAS ARE A
PRIVATE PEOPLE,
NOT EASILY GIVEN TO
DISCUSS **PERSONAL**
MATTERS WITH
OTHERS.

WE WANT NOTHING,
CHILD, EXCEPT TO COM-
MUNICATE WITH SHE
WHOM WE **RAISED** AS IF
SHE WERE OUR OWN
DAUGHTER!

DAUGHTER?



ARE YOU SAYING YOU'RE MY FATHER?

NO, BUT I MIGHT AS WELL BE.

CONSIDERING THE LOT YOU WERE BORN INTO, IT'S A WONDER YOU TURNED OUT AS WELL AS YOU DID!

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?

MORE THAN SOME PEOPLE WISH I DID!

OVER THIRTY YEARS AGO OUR TIME MORITORI REX'S SON LUGER TOOK A BRIDE, THE FAIR MERIN-DA AND BEFORE LONG SHE BORE HIM THEIR TWIN CHILDREN, KRAGOK AND LIEN-DA...

AREN'T THEY BEAUTIFUL, LUGER?

THEY WILL BE WORTHY HEIRS TO DIMITRI!

"WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE ROUGHLY EIGHT YEARS OF AGE, THE PORTAL BETWEEN THE ZONE STEPPENWOLF EXILED OUR KIND TO AND THE FLOATING ISLAND OPENED UP...

WE ARE FREE ONCE MORE, MY CHILDREN!

FREE TO RECLAIM WHAT SHOULD BE OURS!

"UNFORTUNATELY, THE ENVIRONMENT WOULD PROVE MOST INHOSPITABLE TO MERIN-DA...

I NEED TO REST, LUGER!

I FEEL AS THOUGH I'M BURNING UP!

"FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE DARK LEGION RETURNED WILLINGLY TO THE ZONE, BUT TO NO AVAIL.

"MERIN-DA STILL SUC-CUMBED TO WHATEVER AILED HER AND PASSED INTO THE REALM BEYOND...

"SEVERAL YEARS WOULD PASS BEFORE LUGER RECOVERED FROM HIS LOSS, BUT WHEN HE DID, HE ALSO FOUND THE FAIR **MARI-SU**, WHO WOULD PROVE VERY MUCH TO BE EVERY BIT AS CAPABLE AS HE...

"WHILE LUGER MAY HAVE VIEWED HER AS A POTENTIAL **MATE** AND **PARTNER**, OTHERS--MORE SPECIFICALLY **KRAGOK** AND **LEIN-DA**, ABOUT SIXTEEN YEARS OLD AT THIS POINT--SAW **MARI-SU** AS A **THREAT** TO THEIR OWN AMBITIONS...

"IF HE WAS **DIS-PLEASED** WITH HIS CHILDREN'S REACTION LUGER NEVER BETRAYED ANY **OUTWARD SIGNS**, ESPECIALLY ON THE DAY HE TOOK **MARI-SU** TO BE HIS **WIFE**...

THE **NERVE** OF **FATHER**! HE NEVER ASKED WHAT WE THOUGHT!

I DO.

"A YEAR OR SO LATER **YOU** WERE **BORN**...

DON'T CRY, **JULIE-SU**!

DADDY WILL BE HERE AS SOON AS HE FINISHES WORK!

"I TELL YOU, MY DEAR, IT BROKE OUR HEARTS TO SEE YOU GROWING UP, ESPECIALLY AS A **TODDLER**!

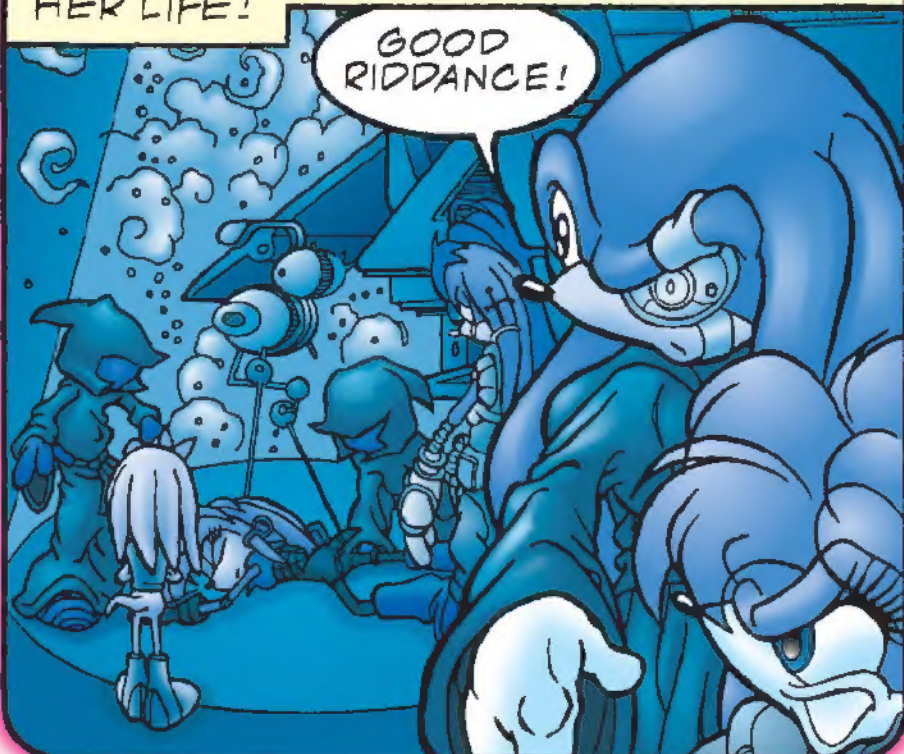
"THERE YOU WERE, WANTING SO BADLY TO PLAY WITH YOUR **HALF-BROTHER** AND **HALF-SISTER**--

"--ONLY TO BE **COMPLETELY IGNORED** AND **SHUNNED** BY THEM!

"JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT IT COULDN'T GET ANY **WORSE** FOR YOU--

"--THAT'S WHEN MARI-SU MET WITH A TRAGIC **ACCIDENT** WHICH CLAIMED HER LIFE!

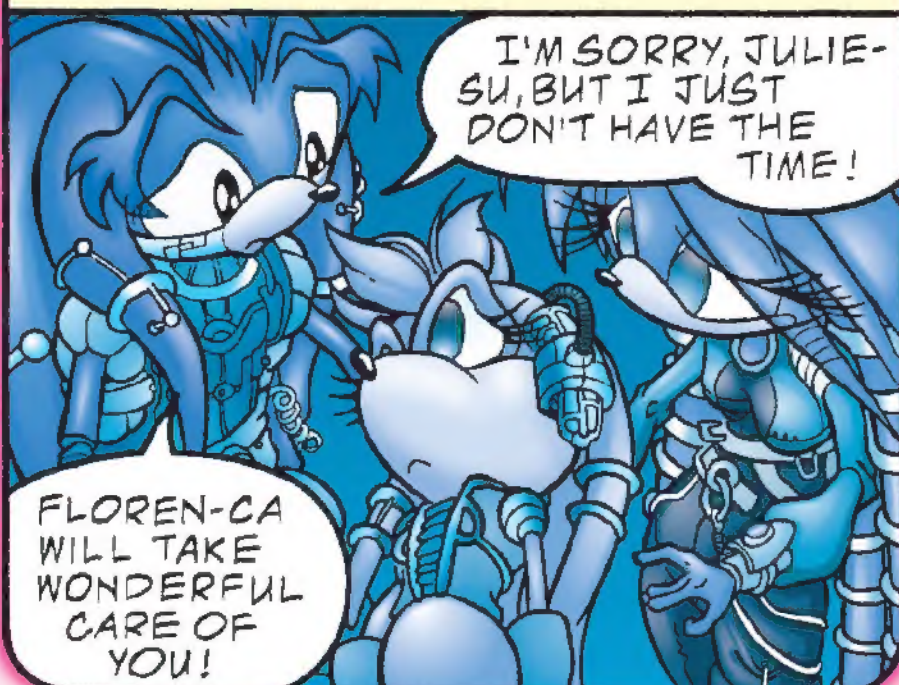
GOOD RIDDANCE!



"LUGER DIDN'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT RAISING A CHILD, SO HE ENTRUSTED YOU INTO THE CARE OF MY WIFE **FLOREN-CA**...

I'M SORRY, JULIE-SU, BUT I JUST DON'T HAVE THE TIME!

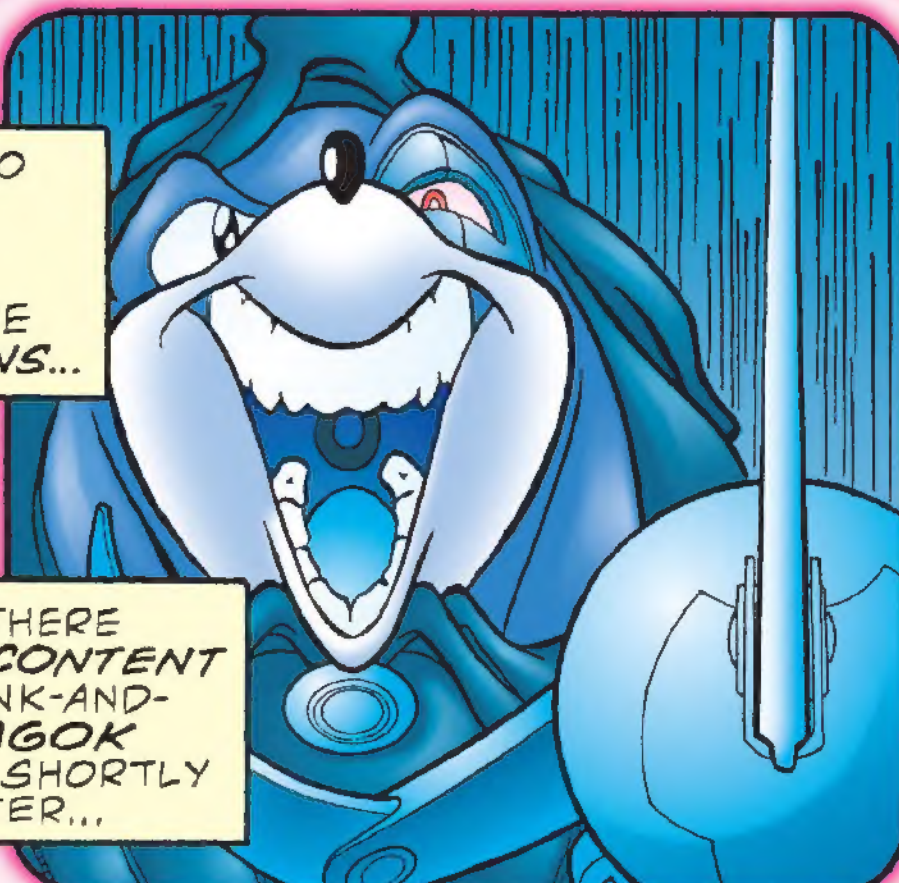
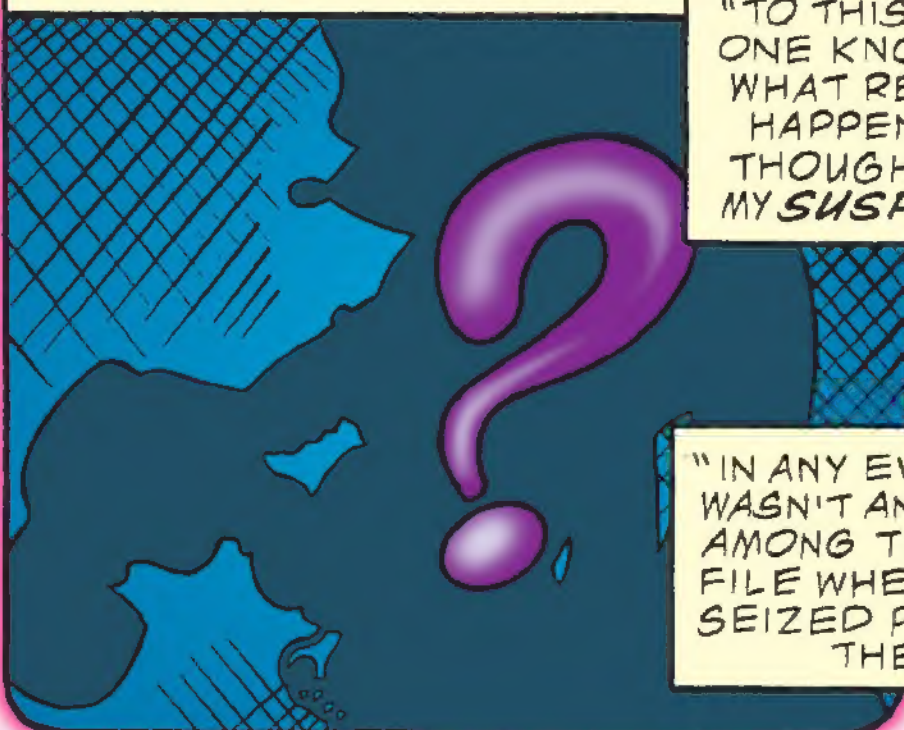
FLOREN-CA WILL TAKE WONDERFUL CARE OF YOU!



"NOT LONG AFTER, LUGER **DIS-APPEARED** WITHOUT A TRACE, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.

"TO THIS DAY, NO ONE KNOWS WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, THOUGH I HAVE MY **SUSPICIONS**...

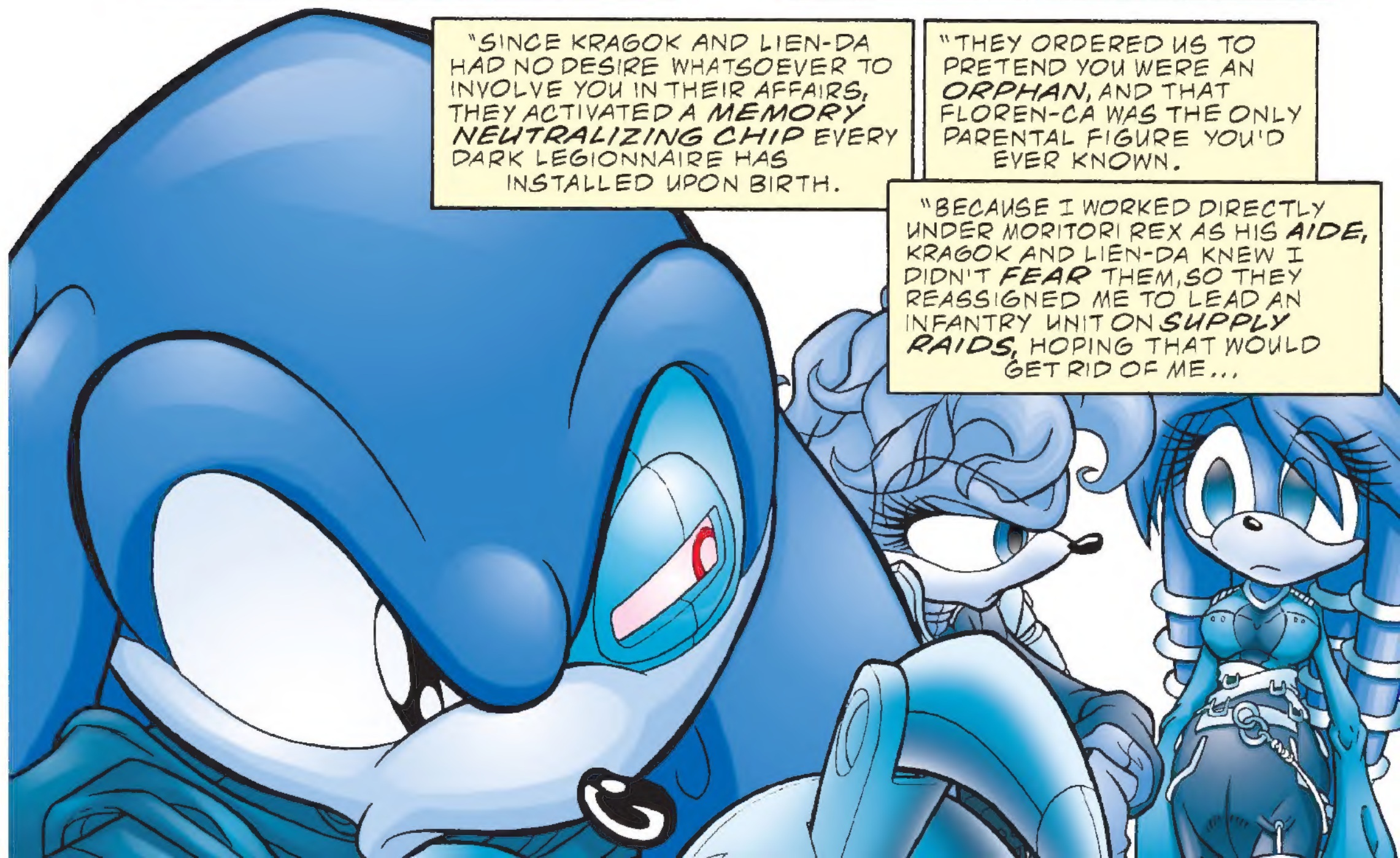
"IN ANY EVENT, THERE WASN'T ANY **DISCONTENT** AMONG THE RANK-AND-FILE WHEN **KRAGOK** SEIZED POWER SHORTLY THEREAFTER...

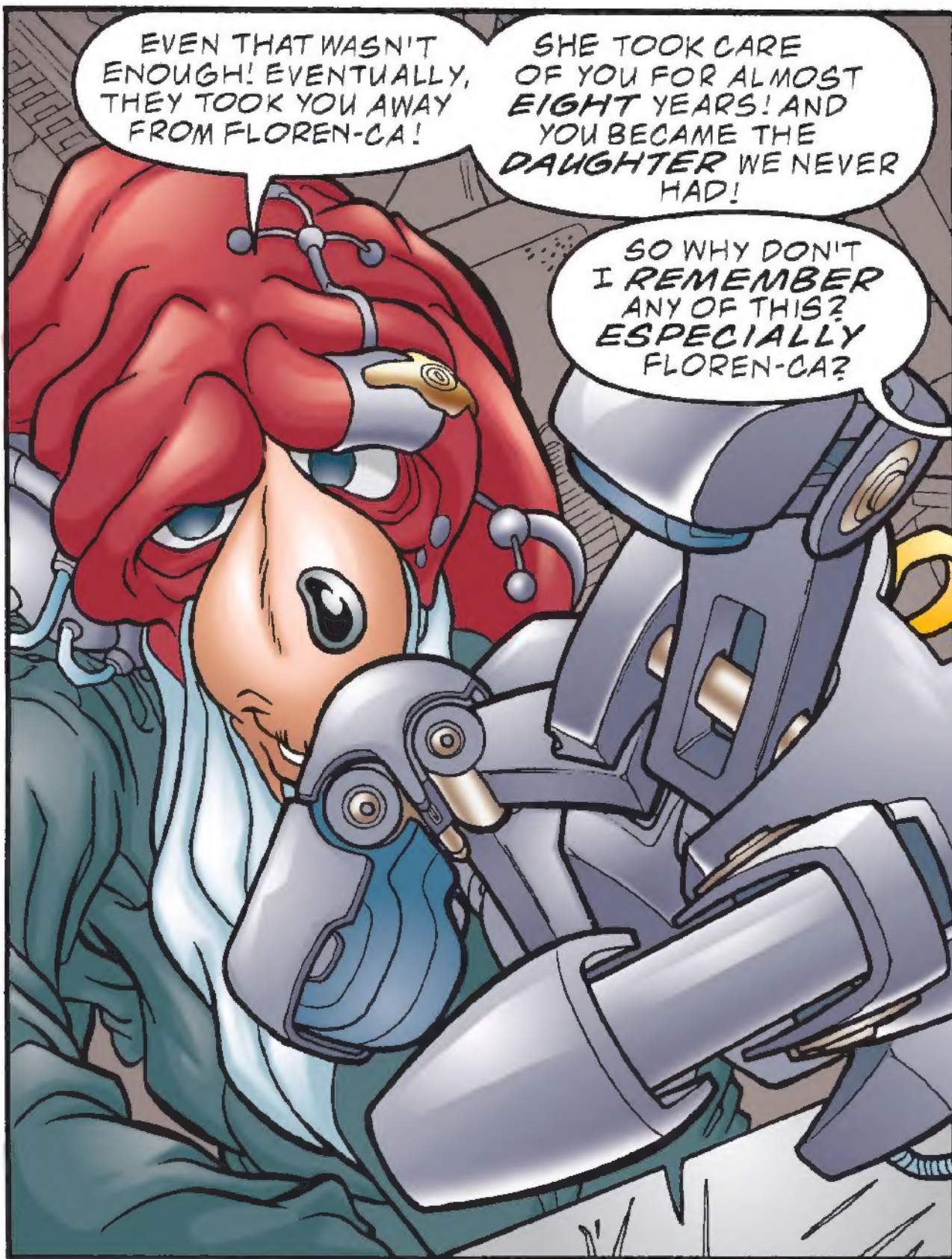


"SINCE KRAGOK AND LIEN-DA HAD NO DESIRE WHATSOEVER TO INVOLVE YOU IN THEIR AFFAIRS, THEY ACTIVATED A **MEMORY NEUTRALIZING CHIP** EVERY DARK LEGIONNAIRE HAS INSTALLED UPON BIRTH.

"THEY ORDERED US TO PRETEND YOU WERE AN **ORPHAN**, AND THAT FLOREN-CA WAS THE ONLY PARENTAL FIGURE YOU'D EVER KNOWN.

"BECAUSE I WORKED DIRECTLY UNDER MORITORI REX AS HIS **AIDE**, KRAGOK AND LIEN-DA KNEW I DIDN'T **FEAR** THEM, SO THEY REASSIGNED ME TO LEAD AN INFANTRY UNIT ON **SUPPLY RAIDS**, HOPING THAT WOULD GET RID OF ME...

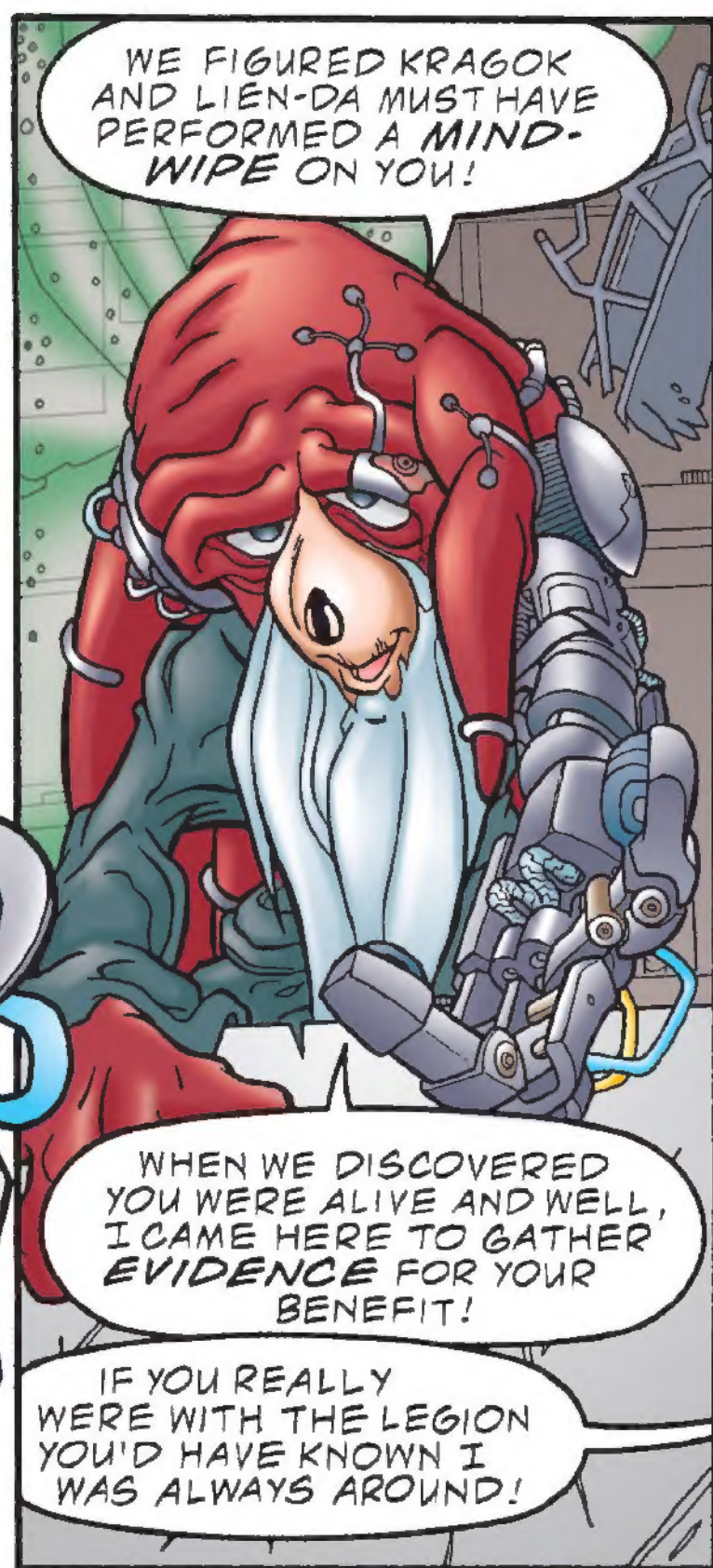




EVEN THAT WASN'T ENOUGH! EVENTUALLY, THEY TOOK YOU AWAY FROM FLOREN-CA!

SHE TOOK CARE OF YOU FOR ALMOST **EIGHT YEARS!** AND YOU BECAME THE **DAUGHTER** WE NEVER HAD!

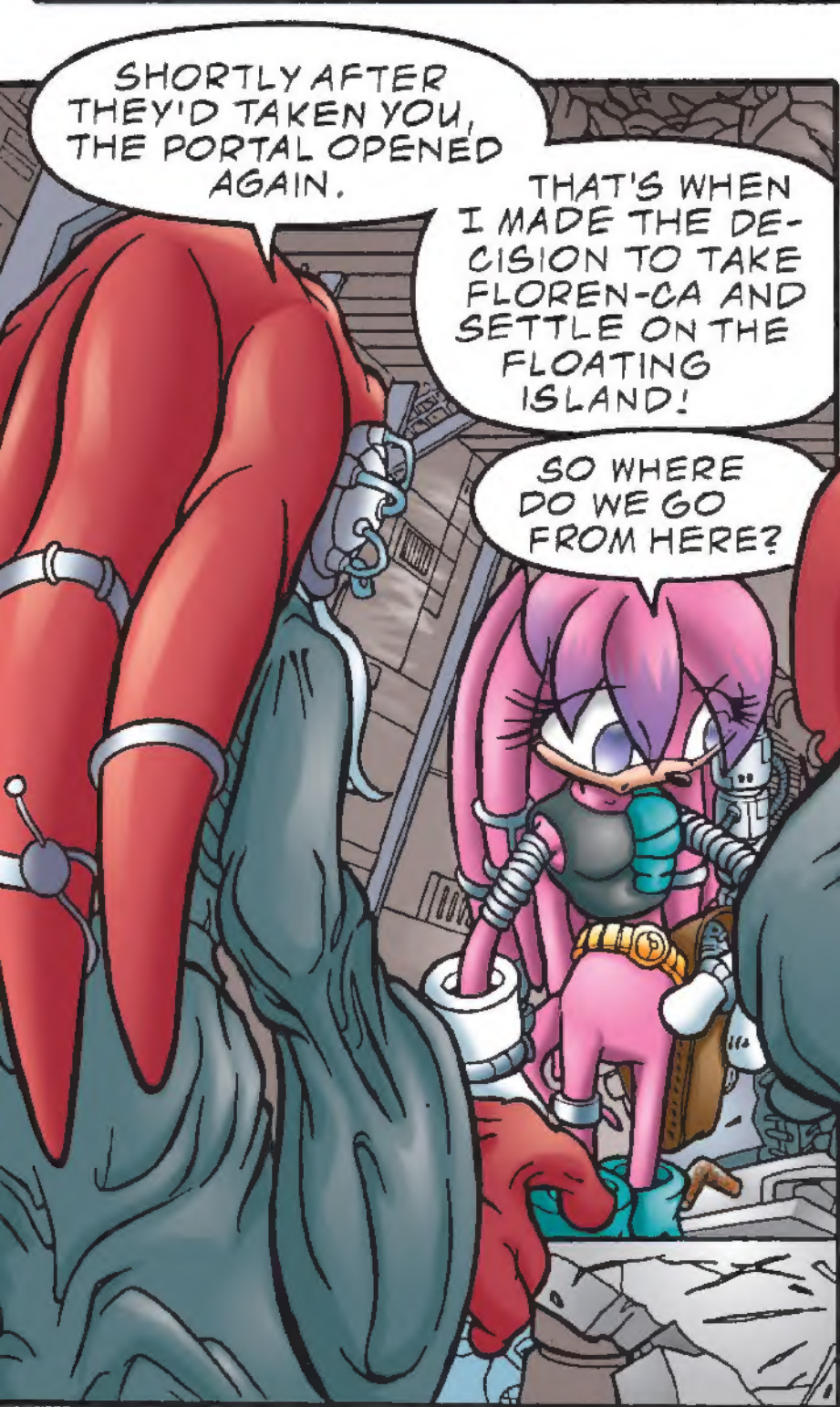
SO WHY DON'T I **REMEMBER** ANY OF THIS? **ESPECIALLY** FLOREN-CA?



WE FIGURED KRAKOK AND LIEN-DA MUST HAVE PERFORMED A **MIND-WIPE** ON YOU!

WHEN WE DISCOVERED YOU WERE ALIVE AND WELL, I CAME HERE TO GATHER **EVIDENCE** FOR YOUR BENEFIT!

IF YOU REALLY WERE WITH THE LEGION YOU'D HAVE KNOWN I WAS ALWAYS AROUND!



SHORTLY AFTER THEY'D TAKEN YOU, THE PORTAL OPENED AGAIN.

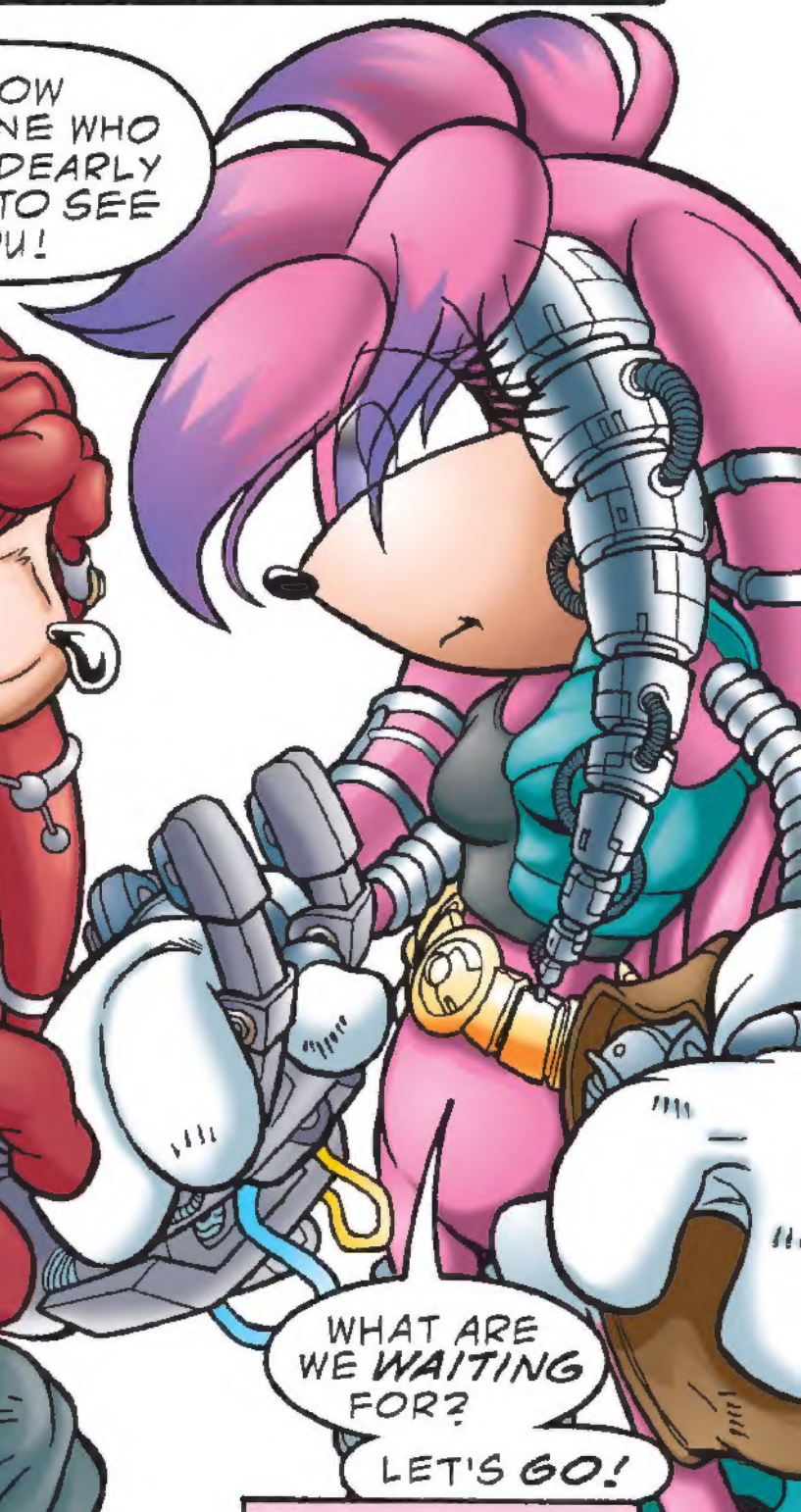
THAT'S WHEN I MADE THE DECISION TO TAKE FLOREN-CA AND SETTLE ON THE FLOATING ISLAND!

SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



LET'S GO HOME, CHILD!

I KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD DEARLY **LOVE** TO SEE YOU!



WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

LET'S GO!

A BEGINNING